

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
JOHN W. RAWLINGS SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

EXPLORING THE PERCEIVED IMPACT OF RETIRED SENIOR PASTORS ON THE
MINISTRY OF EVANGELICAL CHURCHES OF AMERICA

A Prospectus Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

by

Franklin France DeLange

Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA

2020

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of retired senior pastors' (RSPs) involvement in ministry following retirement. The study sought to understanding the perceived impact of RSPs on the ministry of American evangelical Protestant church of RSPs after retirement. The rationale behind the research was the phenomenon that a significant portion of the cohort of retired senior pastors continue to serve in ministry after they have retired. The study heard and analyzed first hand data from RSPs who had lived experience in ministry after leaving the local church they led and RSPs who had lived experience in ministry while remaining at the local church they led following retirement. Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was chosen as the qualitative design for this research since it considers how the participants makes sense of lived experiences. A sample size of 10 participants, purposively selected from qualified candidates, provided sufficient data to answer the research questions. The analysis resulted in five dominant themes and two subthemes which were the results of categorizing the data around the questions. The two subthemes were beneficial in interpreting reasons for RSPs continued involvement in ministry. The research findings revealed convincing evidence that RSPs influence the American evangelical Protestant church. The research contributed to a scarcely populated literature base on RSPs continuing involvement in ministry.

Keywords: Retired senior pastor, lived experience, interview, rich data, themes, explore, perceived impact, ministry

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Dedication

This research, dissertation, and Doctor of Education degree, is dedicated to the many people who have supported, prayed for, and encouraged me through this journey. Fifteen people have been essential to this research and resulting document. They are: My Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who has provided me with the energy, intelligence, and determination, as well as the grades, to stick with the process to the end; My wonderful, God given spouse, Shirley, of 55 years, who has been the nearest person to me, and the closest to the unconditional love of Christ that I know, who has stood by me through many grueling, time sacrificing hours, prayed for me consistently, and has been the most encouraging influence any man could hope for; To my six children, Cheryl and Kris, Francine and Clay, Tiffani and Franklin, and six grandchildren, Andrew, Jonathan, Emily, Oren, Kaitlyn, and Elliotte, who have sacrificed huge amounts of our family times together, kept me in their prayers consistently, and been more encouraging than they could ever know. I love you all more than words can convey.

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List of Abbreviations

American Evangelical Protestant Church (AEPC)

District Superintendent (DS)

Evangelical Christian Scholar (ECS)

Evangelical Theological Society (ETS)

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

Regional Minister (RM)

Research Question (RQ)

Retired Senior Pastor (RSP)

Senior Pastor (SP)

CHAPTER ONE: RESEARCH CONCERN

Introduction

Recent studies on pastors' state in American have provided a potentially bleak outlook for the American evangelical church. In partnership with Pepperdine University, a 2017 study undertaken by the Barna Group revealed that within as little as ten years, there would be a severe shortage of qualified, spirit-filled, spired-led senior pastors to fill the leadership positions in the evangelical churches of America. According to the Barna (2017) study, the senior pastor's average age in America is 56 years old. Additionally, more pastors are over 66 years of age than under 40 years of age (Barna, 2017).

While these statistics may be sobering and a warning for the American evangelical church that there may be a serious shortage of leadership in the near future, other factors must be considered in assessing the situation. One such concern is that theological seminaries and institutions are preparing fewer people for the pastorate than in the past (Hopfensperger (2018). The cost of obtaining a seminary degree versus a secular degree is a contributing factor that causes many students to consider lines of education other than ministry related.

When considering the potential shortage of pastors, one also must consider that churches are in decline (Scanlon, 2017). Since fewer people are choosing to attend established churches, more churches are closing than remaining open. Declining churches means that fewer pastors will be required since declining churches often result in closure. The statistics do not tell the entire story. Other research data appears to provide some hope of relief to the pastoral cohort's aging. Scanlon (2017) reports that pastors are remaining at the job longer. In 2016 the

Presbyterian Church of America reported that a third of the pastors were 66 years or older and continuing to serve.

A promising source of help, and the subject of this study, is the role retired senior pastors play in serving churches today. There is a phenomenon that a large contingency of retired senior pastors is impacting the American evangelical Protestant church (AEPC) in many essential ways. This phenomenon is the basis of this research. Understanding the impact, perceived or actual, of retired senior pastors on ministry, could awaken the evangelical community to the fact that a valuable resource may be ignored when a RSP retires (Albers, 2012).

This study explores the perceived impact retired senior pastors have of the American evangelical Protestant church. It seeks to understand the relationships between retired senior pastors and the senior pastor of the ministry. It endeavors to discern the biblical wisdom on retirement with regards to the permanence of the call of God on the pastors' life.

Background of the Problem

Basis of the Problem

As the Baby-boomer generation begins to approach retirement age, the evangelical Protestant church in America faces a potential problem of significant proportions. Pastors are not preparing in sufficient quantities for ministry, and too many aging pastors are approaching retirement; this is a problem. However, these two facts alone may not tell the entire story. The Association of Theological Schools (ATS) reports a decline in students preparing for pastoral ministry (ATS, 2018). A study by the Presbyterian Church of America (PC[USA]) reports a decrease of students preparing for the ministry. In the last 20 years, the AEPCs have been in a state of decline (Scanlon, 2018). The decline in AEPCs does not necessarily mean that the

number of Christians is in decline. The traditional church of our grandparents is gradually losing members. The current pastoral staff of evangelical churches is maturing and rapidly approaching retirement age (Barna, 2017). The PC(USA) reports that only one in seven pastors is below 40 years of age. This data provides a concise picture of the problem facing the evangelical Protestant churches in America.

The dominant literature on the problem leaves the reader with a head full of knowledge and little guidance for dealing with it. Given the statistics behind each of these slices of the information on the church's status and leadership, experts are in a guessing game on how to prepare for the future of the church. Answers to questions like, 'Will there be a shortage of leadership for the future evangelical churches of America?', or, 'Are churches closing in sufficient number to outpace the need for additional pastors?' are difficult to find. With America's pastoral force aging, experienced leadership is becoming a premium (Barna, 2017).

Untapped Potential

There is a, however, another element to the equation. A large cohort of retired senior pastors with decades of wisdom, experience, and time, who appear willing, able, and desirous of being used for kingdom purposes, is a source seldom recognized in the literature to be of any use to the church of the future. Kroeger (1996), in a study on the subject of ministerial retirements, notes that there is a lack of published materials on this group of retirees (p. 6). In the 24 years since Kroeger's research, there has been an increase of literature on pastors' retirement; however, very little literature has been written on retired pastors' involvement in ministry. This seldom mentioned force of experienced pastors is comprised of members of the Silent

Generation and older Baby Boomers (Barna, 2017; Scanlon, 2018). Ignoring the experienced of retire senior pastor may prove to be a waste of God-given resources.

Kroeger (1996) wrote that he believed retired pastors should be actively engaged in equipping the saints, laypeople, for ministry. He suggested that the retired pastor be involved in more substantial ministry forms such as making disciples, trainers, enablers, mentors, and directors of spiritual formation for active pastors and lay pastors (p. 3). Bostrom (1983) discusses the most essential purpose for making retirement plans. He writes:

It is clear up to this point, that if there is one message that stands out above all others and emerges as the object and burden of this study, it is the need of retirement planning for ministers in order to avoid the wastage of talent and the loss of skills, experience and the potential contributions for ministry which often go unused and neglected. (p. xi)

In other words, when planning for retirement, the essential element of the plan is the ministry the retiree will be involved in when he retires. Using the God-given talents, those valuable, kingdom-centered resources, is vital to the retiree.

The Problem of The Call

In an article on preparation for retirement, Manners (2017) asks pastors, thinking about retirement, “What will you do with your calling?” He commented that retirement does not mean you are giving up your calling (p. 4). The dichotomy is being retired and being involved in ministry. Balancing what ministry, how much involvement, and where to minister while enjoying retirement can be challenging. Scherer (2016) suggests that retirement provides the retiree the freedom to choose how, when, and where he wants to serve. He advises retired pastors to seek ministry away from the congregation he worships in and to maintain distance from the former congregation (p. 3).

In a research study involving 70 retired pastors serving ministries in their retirement years, Kroeger (1996) reported that almost 86 percent of the participants were actively involved in ministry following retirement (p. 298). He comments, “Why have they (retired pastors) responded to these calls? Because they have taken the church’s call to be God’s calling, and who can withstand the call of God even if it is to that which is not relished?” (p. 137).

The Permanence of The Call

While the Bible is not explicit on a pastor’s retirement, there is evidence that the servant of God’s role is never-ending, merely changing in responsibility. Numbers 8:23-25 provides a picture of the Levites, not priests, changing positions as they grew older. Retirement is not mentioned in this Scripture. However, their role becomes one of advising the younger Levites in their service and letting the younger Levites do the actual work. Scripture appears to hold that the high priest served until death (*New International Version*, 1973/1984, Numbers 20:25-28). The apostle Paul mentored both Timothy and Titus, and in doing so, the message of enduring to the finish is evident. That he believed retirement was not an option is demonstrated in his words to Timothy in 2 Timothy 1:12, “For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.” (*New American Standard Bible*, 1909/2005, 2 Timothy 1:12). In his mentoring, he encourages Timothy to finish the course and fight the fight until the end.

Kroeger (1996) notes that clergy never retire. He comments, “It is especially true that there is no retiring from the call to pastoral ministry. The pastor is ordained for life to the ministry of the ‘Word and sacrament.’” (p. 4). This premise that the pastor is ordained for life is supported by McKeever (2014), who believes that he remains in the ministry when the pastor

retires. McKeever writes, “We are always on duty for the Lord, whether anyone employs us or pays us a salary or not.” (p. 1). King David declared such sentiments as these in Psalm 71:18; “And even when I am old and gray, O God, do not forsake me, until I declare Your strength to this generation, Your power to all who are to come.” (*New American Standard Bible*, 1909/2005, Psalm 71:18). Even when a pastor is old, retired, out of a job, he has a ministry to the Lord until he cannot accomplish the task.

Literature Gap

There is a gap in the current literature on the impact of the retired senior pastor on ministry. Literature is scarce concerning the effect of the retired senior pastor on the evangelical church. Literature is plentiful on the topic of pastors’ retirement. Everything from planning on retiring before one retires, finding a hobby, making new friends, talking to your wife more, taking care of one’s health, and finances (Earls, 2019; McKeever, 2014; Scherer, 2016). However, little has been written on the tasks and roles retired senior pastors serve or on the spiritual contribution to the local church. Kroeger (1996) noted that he undertook his research on retired pastors because of the short supply of literature (p. 6). Additional research is needed to explore the reasons behind this phenomenon. Such research could yield an understanding of the impact of retired pastors and determine if sufficient data exists to warrant future research on the topic.

Researchers Relationship to the Research

The researcher retired at the end of 2012 at the age of 72. Following retirement, he remained active at the church he led for seven years. He supported the interim pastor, whom he had mentored for five years, and recommended being considered the succeeding pastor. The

researcher continued in a support role for three years. Remaining at the ministry one had led had its challenges. It required compromise. It required patience. However, this researcher's most important lesson is that he is retired, no longer is he the senior pastor. He is in a support role.

Sensing an increase in tension between himself and the succeeding pastor, he found it essential to step away from the ministry to let the senior pastor exercise his authority without the researcher's influence. Stepping aside from the ministry he loved was one of the most challenging periods in ministry for him. The transition from senior pastor to associate pastor was more difficult than the researcher imagined; however, knowledge was gained in understanding the environment of cooperation necessary for a former pastor to remain at the church they led. Scherer (2016) provides sound advice for pastors considering staying at the church they led. He wrote,

In the end it all depends upon relationships. If a retired pastor and the current pastor are mature and healthy enough to have a caring relationship that places the welfare of the ministry first, the presence of a retired pastor can be a blessing in terms of wisdom, experience, history and a trusted advocate. If that relationship does not exist, it may be best for the retired pastor to move on. (p. 3)

After three years, the relationship between the senior pastor and researcher became beneficial to the church's ministry.

This research will explore the phenomenon from the participants' point of view and in their manner of telling their story, to understand the impact to ministry, if any, of the retired senior pastor remaining at or leaving the church they led. The participant position, will explore if there is a perceived benefit to the local church, of a retired senior pastor's involvement.

Statement of Problem

According to research on the aging of American evangelical pastors, the evangelical church faces a shortage of senior pastors. The potential need is difficult to fully understand and plan for since there are many influencing factors. Churches are closing at a substantial rate; Recently there has been a slight increase in the number of pastors preparing for church ministry; Pastors continue to remain active in leading their churches longer. These are a few of the important subjects that will continue to influence the need for additional pastors.

According to recent studies, the shortage may occur within ten years (Barna, 2017; Scherer, 2016). The two most recent, significant studies, Barna Group and PC(USA), present many statistics. Conclusions have been drawn based on these statistics. The issue with relying on these studies' statistics to determine if there will be a shortage of pastors in the future, are so many variables. Each of the variables is often distantly related to each other. Adding to the difficulties of relying on the statistics are the different influences on each variable. Experts can quickly become overwhelmed or enamored by the many data pieces, only to become confused, discouraged, and not to find likely results to answer their problem. Nolis (2018) writes about the mistake of 'data-driven decision making' and the error it can bring to an organization. Trapp (2018), a proponent of using data for smart decision making, warns, "Leaders must not be seduced into thinking that basing decisions on data necessarily makes them beyond reproach." (Trapp, 2018, para. 1).

The problem addressed in this interpretative phenomenological analysis study is understanding the perceived impact retired senior pastors may have on ministry following retirement. Retired senior pastors possess a wealth of wisdom and knowledge, which may reduce

the crisis facing the evangelical Protestant church. This research explores the lived experience of ten retired senior pastors who retirement and shared their perceived impact on ministry first hand. The study will explore four areas of influence by retired senior pastors. The areas in question are: how does one know when to leave a ministry upon retirement, what perceived impact does the retired senior pastor have on ministry while remaining at the church they led, what perceived impact does the retired senior pastor have on ministry when leaving the church they led before retirement, what position or role did the retired pastor hold in continuing to serve, and what perceived impact did the retired senior pastor have on the senior pastor of the church they chose to serve in after retirement.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) study is to explore the lived experience of retired senior pastors concerning their perceived impact on the ministry of the American evangelical Protestant church. The study will seek data on both of the phenomena: the retired senior pastor's effect on ministry while remaining at the local church they led, and the effect on ministry of a retired senior pastor's leaving the local church they led.

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide this study:

- RQ1.** What, if any, are the signs that tell a retired senior pastor whether they should remain at or should leave the church they led when they?
- RQ2.** What, if any, is the perceived impact to the ministry if the retired senior pastor leaves the local church they led?
- RQ3.** What, if any, is the perceived impact to ministry if the retired senior pastor remains at the local church they led?

RQ4. What, if any, role can the retired senior pastor play in the success of the local church ministry?

RQ5. What, if any, is the impact of the retired senior pastor on the succeeding pastor?

Assumptions and Delimitations

Research Assumptions

Qualitative research has the potential of providing valuable lived experience from the stories of each participant. However, it also has a higher risk of researcher bias due to having personal lived experience with the phenomenon. Researcher bias may be seen in the researcher's influence, interpretation, and assumptions (Creswell, 2014, Leady & Ormrod, 2014). In response to this potential bias the following assumptions are essential to the research.

1. Retired senior pastors, in general, are expected to have continued to serve in ministry following retirement.
2. The retired senior pastor is in proper standing with Christ. Their relationship with Christ and the church is biblically-based.
3. The retired senior pastor has not retired for moral or disciplinary reasons.
4. The researcher and participants in this study are fallible. The data collected through the research process may have inconsistencies, misinterpretations, incomplete or flawed.
5. The researcher will accurately reflect the transcript of the participants' lived experience.
6. The researcher has personal lived experience with the research topic and therefore, inject researcher bias.

Delimitations of the Research Design

This research's delimitations have been intentionally made to ensure completion of the research in a thorough and timely manner.

1. This research is delimited to retired senior pastors having led intermediate-sized (200 to 1000 congregational members). The study has this delimitation because congregations of larger and much smaller members are believed to have different leadership dynamics than the size planned for this research. It does not include retired pastors having led substantially smaller or larger congregations before retirement.
2. The research is further delimited to evangelical Protestant churches. The research does not include Catholic and nonevangelical churches.
3. The research is delimited to pastors leaving the ministry before the calendar year 2010. The research does not include pastors whose experience is not current.
4. The research is delimited to pastors of evangelical Protestant churches of America. No pastor of churches outside the United States will be included in this research.

Definition of Terms

1. *Evangelical Christian church*: The evangelical Christian church is defined as holding to the following beliefs (NAE, 2015):
 - (a) *Conversionism*: the belief that lives need to be transformed through a “born-again” experience and a lifelong process of following Jesus.
 - (b) *Activism*: the expression and demonstration of the gospel in missionary and social reform efforts.
 - (c) *Biblicism*: a high regard for and obedience to the Bible as the ultimate authority.
 - (d) *Crucicentrism*: a stress on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross as making possible the redemption of humanity.
2. *Evangelical Christian scholar (Pastor) (ETS, 1949)*: One devoted to the inerrancy and inspiration of the Scriptures and the gospel of Jesus Christ.
3. *Ministry*: focus on the overall ministry of the church, unless specifically identified as ministry of the local church.
4. *Retired Senior Pastor (RSP)*: a retired pastor who was the lead human, spiritual authority in a specific church prior to retirement.
5. *Senior Pastor (SR)*: a pastor who is or was the lead human, spiritual authority in a specific church.

6. *Zoom conferencing software*: subscription video and voice software enabling electronic face-to-face meetings, exchanges and communication, and audio transcription.

Significance of the Study

A Barna Group (2017) research conducted in 2017 provided statistics which demonstrated that there is a looming crisis in evangelical Protestant churches. Fifty percent of all Protestant pastors are older than 56 years of age. The research further revealed that 85 percent of all Protestant pastors were older than 40 years of age. Seminaries are preparing fewer people for the pastorate ministry than 10 years ago (Scanlon, 2020). Based on the Barna Group's study's empirical results, the data shows that there will be a shortage of qualified, Spirit-led, and fed pastors coming in the near future. Senior pastors are indeed remaining in the pulpit longer; however, this will have only an insignificant impact on the crisis unless there is a substantial shift in the number of church closures. A mitigating factor to the possible shortage may be that churches are closing, reducing the need for more pastors (Scanlon, 2020).

What could this potential ministerial shortage mean to the church? Three possibilities are worth considering: Churches may be forced to use fill-in pastors who do not have an investment in the work of the ministry of that particular church; Churches may rely on lay-persons to perform the pastoral responsibilities. Most lay-people will not have adequate theological training or time since laypeople most likely have employment outside the church. Therefore, the ministry may suffer and even decrease; Some churches may find it necessary to close their doors, scattering the people to other ministries. This potential shortage of senior pastor candidates needs to be addressed, considering using any qualified resources available.

The research proposed in this study may provide data that could help alleviate a portion of the potential crisis. Retired senior pastors have a wealth of knowledge and experience. Understanding the impact of retired senior pastors on the local church could benefit the senior pastor and the congregation.

Most senior pastors have so many irons in the fire, and they do not have adequate 'free-time' to devote to scouting out and investing in potential pastoral candidates. The retired senior pastors might redefine their role to include encouraging, mentoring younger people, being disciplers, teachers, ministry leaders, filling the pulpit to give the pastor an occasional break (Kroeger, 1996, p. 3). This change in the retired senior pastor's responsibility and role may contribute towards resolving the shortage problem.

The research will help the church understand why retired senior pastors continue to serve following retirement. The study has the potential to reveal the depth of impact on the evangelical Protestant church as a result of retired senior pastors continuing to serve. It will help the evangelical church understand the benefit to the succeeding pastor of having a retired senior pastor's support. Additionally, understanding the perceived impact that retired senior pastors have on ministry will provide data for further research on a potential shortage of senior pastors due to retirement.

Summary of the Design

The research was an interpretative phenomenological analysis study. The study design addressed 10 qualified participants, in semi-structured, one-on-one interviews, using Zoom video conferencing software. The interview was structured to build rapport with each participant; and provide sufficient opportunity for them to tell their story, think, speak, and be heard. The

interview was intended to be in-depth, with the hopes of obtaining valuable lived experience of the participants. Analysis of the data continued until dominant themes surface. The data was then synthesized to mine the interpretation of the participant's lived experience. The interviewer used a loosely prepared protocol (Bitterstaff & Thompson, 2008), containing the research questions and open-ended interview questions for discussion with the participants. The emphasis was on understanding the story of the participant. With the permission of each participant, the interviews were audio and video recorded.

Following each interview, the recordings were transcribed for accuracy. Notes reflected significant changes in voice, specific pauses and emphasis and other interesting comments on the participant's part. Each transcript was read and re-read to guard against presuppositions and judgments. A notebook of the interview process, transcription process, and data analysis reflected the interview's specifics.

Following the interview, notes/recording, and transcriptions, the researcher subjected the transcripts to content analysis to identify, code, and categorize pertinent data. NVivo 12 Plus software was used to accomplish content analysis. The content analysis concluded when no additional codes or categories surfaced from the data. Analysis of the final categories was done to search for dominant themes. Themes were evaluated against the research question and the findings were recorded. The researcher interpreted the findings in an effort to understand the value of the research.

The process followed these steps:

- Research schedule was be prepared

- Broad e-mail survey was sent to 50 retired pastors (sample size of 10 divided by 25%=40 surveys) and 6 denominations requesting retired senior pastors' participation in the research.
- Respondents were screened to select 10 qualified participants and two alternates, to be used in the event two of the 10 participants found it necessary to withdraw from the research. The alternates were necessary.
- Interviews with qualified participants were scheduled.
- Recordings were transcribed into usable data.
 - Preliminary themes were identified.
 - Themes were grouped into like-clusters.
 - Themes were tabulated into a table.
- Analysis of data determine that no further research was required for the study on the phenomenon.

The interviews focused on the phenomenon that when a senior pastor retired from the lead pastor position, they continued to benefit to ministry. "The focus of qualitative inquiries was on describing, understanding, and clarifying a human lived experience. It required collecting a series of intense lived experiences." (Polkinghorne, 2005, p.139). The sample participants were selected from respondents to a brief questionnaire sent electronically via e-mail to retired senior pastors. Letters or electronic mail was sent to approximately 50 retired senior pastors, informing them of the proposed research and inviting them to participate. This population was selected to ensure an adequate number of participants were available for the study. The qualified participants who accepted the invitation to participate in the research were scheduled for an interview via video conferencing software.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This research aims to explore the perceived impact of retired senior pastors on evangelical Protestant churches in America. The research's primary focus is on the lived experiences of retired senior pastors who have continued to serve in various ministry positions after they retired. The single most important task in searching literature is to focus on the research's central theme (Machi & McEvoy, 2017; Galvan & Galvan, 2017). This research's central theme is the impact on ministry by retired senior pastors, as perceived by the retired senior pastor. Relevant literature addresses the retirement and elements that support retired senior pastors' journey to ministry following retirement.

This chapter presents a review of relevant literature relating to the phenomenon and surrounding issues that retired senior pastors continue to impact ministry following retirement. The literature addresses the significant categories related to a pastor's retirement. The chapter begins with the biblical framework, which addresses the theological considerations for each topic and subtopic. Following the biblical framework is a section on the theoretical framework that will lead the reader through the relationship between the literature and the research findings. Categories addressed in this chapter are; reflections on the pastor's calling into ministry by God; the decision to retire; the transition from a life of leading and doing to a life of being; issues and benefits of the pastor remaining at the church from which they retired or moving to a different church; and relationships between the succeeding pastor. The literature review's progression will conclude that there appears to be a gap in the literature concerning the impact on a retired senior pastor's ministry.

Theological Framework for the Study

The theological framework for this study provides the biblical foundation on which the research will be accomplished. The literature reviewed focuses primarily on strong biblical and theological sources. Throughout the years, pastors have faced retirement. The literature addressing the retirement of the clergy is at a premium because of the scarcity of it. The theological framework addressed literature relating to the elements influencing the retired pastor's retirement decisions and continuing to serve in the ministry.

Pastor's Calling

God's call on a person's life has been described as a transcendent summons, experienced beyond the self, to approach a particular life role oriented towards deriving a sense of purpose and holding other-oriented values as primary sources of motivation. (Dik & Duffy 2009:34). Their description of a calling (a transcendent summons) carries the idea of passion. They place calling as something that happens outside the individual. It is from an external force. Their definition synchs well with the interpreted scriptural meaning of a call from God.

When one considers that the Almighty God Himself beckons any person on earth to do His work, it is incredible. It is amazing in light of Scripture like Romans 3:10-12: "There is none righteous, not even one; there is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God; all have turned aside, together they have become useless; there is none who does good, there is not even one." (*New American Standard Version, 1909/2005, Romans 3:10-12*). However, the pages of Scripture containing God's call of individuals are plentiful. God calls broken vessels, who are themselves needy, to do His work on this earth.

Campbell (2002) asserts that to hear God's call is an honor unequalled on human beings. His incomparable beckoning raises us to our true dignity as creatures made in the image and likeness of God (p. 1). Luther asserted that the concept of calling is more than a necessary evil, but a divine offering (as cited in Bunderson & Thompson, 2009, p.32). Subsequent refinements by John Calvin and others exalted work further by making this offering uniquely personal. Calvin taught that one's calling did not derive simply from one's given station in life, as suggested by Luther (Weber, 1930: 85), and from one's particular God-given gifts and talents (Hardy, 1990: 66). In other words, according to the giants of the faith from centuries past, the reformers, a calling by God is one in which God provides the talents, gifts and aptitude in preparation for any task which will benefit others (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Pinzer, 2017).

The call on a pastor's life and the church is extremely valuable (Lucas, 1989; Birdges, 2012). To be called to ministry means called to a ministry-focused vocation, not merely to minister, which all Christians have been called, biblically, to do (Allen, 2016, para. 8). Often vocational choice has not been made by the person but pursued by them due to the extreme external influence on their heart and mind. Spurgeon (1889) wrote, "No man may intrude into the sheepfold as an under-shepherd; he must have an eye to the chief Shepherd, and wait his beck and command. Or ever a man stands forth as God's ambassador, he must wait for the call from above..." (p. 19).

For the pastor, unlike those who feel called in the secular world, God's call is everything and requires everything in return. It is the starting point from which a person's life will be totally changed. In their description of the zookeeper's call, Bunderson and Thompson (2009) relate that the zookeeper felt the inner knowledge that the occupation they chose was why they

existed; however, there was no mention of the caller or where the feeling originated. The choice of profession for one becoming a pastor is very different. The pastor knows who is calling and what they must do. Harvey (2012) explains that the caller, God, is more important than the call and is the reason for the call's power. The caller initiates the call (p. 34).

The Clergy profession is more than preaching the Word of God: more than a concerned leader influencing the souls of humanity, more than a prayer warrior. The pastor is concerned with: matters here on earth, issues that are temporal matters, eternal matters, matters beyond time and the confines of this brief earthly stay (Drury, 2003). "Faithfulness in a calling implies a life devoted to service in a community and a level of involvement and dedication to one's work that goes beyond self-interest. A calling is a task set by God with a sense of obligation to work for the purposes other than one's own" (Christopherson, 1994, p. 219). It is only by God's work in us that we can do true work, confirming that one's direction comes from God and that it is a gift from God to be used for His purpose (Murry, 1983).

Spurgeon's (1889) message to his students was that the role of pastor (Bishopric) requires a total surrender to spiritual work and separation from every secular calling (Lecture 2, p. 18). He spoke that the "solemn" work of the kingdom demands the totality of a person and the very best that the person has to give (p. vi, para. 2). God's call of a person may require sacrifices. The pursuit of our vocation can, however, be costly because it can lead to our being separated from people who are close to us and set apart for the work of the Kingdom of God (Hans Urs Von Balthasar, as cited in Secomb, 2015; Schindler, 2004).

Brown (2007) believes that God's call is to the person and not the assignment or plan. It is a call to total surrender and obedience. It is a call to die to yourself and to live to Him. Many

authors hold the theme of sacrifice. The theme is not necessarily restricted to a religious environment. Christopherson (1994) writes, “Faithfulness in a calling implies a life devoted to service in a community and a level of involvement and dedication to one’s work that goes beyond self-interest. A calling is a task set by God with a sense of obligation to work for the purposes other than one’s own” (Christopherson, 1994, p. 219).

Scriptural Support for God’s Call

Peterson (2000) writes that the pastors' call is unique. The apostle Paul substantiated this in Ephesians 4:11 when he states: “And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelist, and some as pastors and teachers...” (*New American Standard Bible*, 1909/2005, Ephesians 4:11). Scripture is the beginning of hearing God’s call on one’s life (Blackaby, Brandt, Henry and Skinner, 1997). Blackaby (2001) believes the leading of a righteous person comes from God. His comments reflect that a true leader is totally dependent on God because he spends much time in prayer and God’s word.

Andrew Murray (1983) commenting on Ephesians 3:4,7: “The mystery of Christ...whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power” (*King James Version*, 1908/1957, Ephesians 3:4,7), believes that it is only by God’s working in us that we can do true work, confirming that one’s direction comes from God and that it is a gift from God to be used for His purpose. A significant New Testament Scripture on the call of God is found in Ephesians 4:11, “And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service...” (*New American Standard Bible*,

1909/2005, Ephesians 4:11). While not using the word “calling”, this Scripture cannot be interpreted any other way than as a calling or ordering from God.

Old Testament Scripture contains many accounts of godly men and women being called for special leadership tasks, by God. Each call was different and yet very similar. Each call was a spiritual experience. Persons receiving the call from God considered themselves unworthy of the summons. Samuel heard the voice of God three times, calling him into service. When God spoke the fourth time, Samuel answered the call (I Samuel 3). Isaiah 6 recorded the Prophet’s call from God when he was a child, consecrating him to the service of God. Jeremiah was prepared for God’s call before he was born. Jeremiah 1:5 states, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations.” (*New American Standard Bible*, 1909/2005, Jeremiah 1:5). Ezekiel received a similar, dynamic call from God. Moses’ call from God to lead Israel, found in Exodus 3, is an example of a vibrant, emotional experience that had a lasting impact on Israel and the world.

Each of these servants of God received the call of God in a life-changing, unforgettable, spiritual encounter that had similar results and could not be mistaken. Literature shows that God calls a person with an express assignment. Ehrlich (2016) notes that the biblical examples of people receiving a call look as if they are experience-based. He relates that experience-based calls generate ministry effectiveness, regardless of the recipient (Ehrlich, 2016). Sanders (1994) comments that God’s greatest gifts are the men and women whom He has called to serve. They are more significant than anything else man holds valuable (p. 146).

The call to pastoral ministry is a call to a particular position within the life of a faith community and the wider church. The role is specific, not all-inclusive of the person, and it is not

to be confused with one's baptismal identity. Moreover, it is only one of several roles in which the pastor is called to serve in life (Mahlberg, Nesson & Cooper-White, 2016, pp.124-125). The pastor's call from God is more than their call to faith. It is a call to serve. While most pastors or people's call is not as dramatic and certain as that of Samuel in I Samuel 3:3-8, to the individual it appears as certain and definite. The certainty of the call makes the decision to retire more difficult for a pastor.

Understanding the Call

The researcher sought to understand the mind of a retired pastor with respect to the relationship of their retirement and their calling. A substantial amount of literature on God's calling of a pastor exists; however, the literature on the pastor's reflection and the nature of their calling was scarce. It is essential to explore the literature on these topics and the origin and permanence of one's call.

In a research study by Lucas (1989), 61% of the pastors who participated in the research believed that God's call was so important that it overshadowed their personal feelings (p. 110).

Kemper (1988) describes the mind of a pastor when thinking about retirement. He writes:

...we clergy derive our identity and status from our work. For forty years we are called by a title that describes who we are and what we do – 'the Reverend', 'Pastor', 'the Minister or our church.' Our personhood, our very being, is identified with what we do. We are known to others – and we know ourselves – by our professional role. Hence to defining retirement as 'quitting work' is tantamount to the death of our own personhood! When we no longer work, who will we be? (p. 5)

Understanding God's call on a person's life is an important step in knowing what they are being called to. The Apostle Paul wrote, "When you understand God's calling on your life, it will give you incredible hope. Then you will discover the glorious blessings that will be yours

together with all of God's people" (*Contemporary English Version*, 1995, Ephesians 1:18-19).

The Psalmist wrote; "The steps of a good and righteous man are directed and established by the LORD, and He delights in his way and blesses his path" (*Amplified Version*, 1965, Psalm 37:23).

And King David understood the magnitude of God's call in Psalm 139, "All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them!" (*New International Version*, 1973/1984, Psalm 139:16-17).

Leaders who are called by God can find a picture of God's expectations in the Scriptures. In John 21:18, Jesus called Peter to lead His church. After Jesus called Peter, He described a leader: "I tell you the truth, when you were young, you were able to do as you liked; you dressed yourself and went wherever you wanted to go. But when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and others will dress you and take you where you don't to go." (*New Living Bible*, 1971/1975, John 21:18) Nouwen (2002), commenting on Peter's call to leadership writes:

Jesus confronts him (*Peter*) with the hard truth that the servant-leader is the leader who is being led to unknown, undesirable, and painful places. The way of the Christian leader is not the way of upward mobility in which our world has invested so much, but the way of downward mobility ending on the cross...those who have heard of the first love and said yes to it, the downward-moving way of Jesus is the way to the joy and the peace of God, a joy and peace that is not of this world...Christian leadership is not a leadership of power and control, but a leadership of powerlessness and humility in which the suffering servant of God, Jesus Christ, is made manifest. (pp. 80-82)

In other words, in Christian terms, leadership is total surrender of self and the manifestation of Christ in all the leader is and does.

The Permanence of the Call

There is a line of thought that holds that permanent means leaving the duration of service in the Lord's hands. Those who serve God and who call people to serve wait for the Lord to indicate how long that service is to be (Lauersdorg, 1988). Lauersdorg is referring to a specific situation or ministry. Duffy and Dik (2013) suggested that individuals endorse a calling along a spectrum of simply having a calling versus not having one. They introduced a distinction between seeking and experiencing a calling and described calling as an ongoing process rather than something to be discovered once and for all. They proposed that callings often change over time (Duffy & Dik, 2013). In other words, a calling changes with the task or assignment the person believes they have been called to.

Most pastors believe the call from God is permanent and is never revoked. It may change in location and level of involvement but never in focus. Pastors understand that God may move them to different ministries as He deems necessary. Their call to preach the gospel and prepare the church to fulfill the great commission of reaching the world for Christ is irrevocable. This thought is held by Adams (2015), who comments that circumstances, timing, events, jobs all may change but one's calling will not. He quotes the Apostle Paul's words from Romans 11:29, "God's gifts and His calling are irrevocable" (*New International Version, 1973/1984, Romans 11:29*). Paul was addressing God's relationship with Israel. However, both Old and New Testaments demonstrate the permanence of God's call.

Genesis 17 records God's irrevocable covenant with Abram, Psalm 89 shows God's covenant with David, and for the entire world, the most essential covenant is found in John 3:16. Literature and Scripture document the permanence of God's call. Bell (2005) argues that the

irrevocability of God' gifts and His call has enormous implications for both the Jew and Christian. If His gifts and call are revocable towards Israel, the promise of salvation must also be revocable (Bell, 2005, pp. 278-281).

Kroeger (1996) and Manner (2017) suggest that there is no retiring from the ministry of the “word and sacrament.” The task is the same, even though the environment and setting are changed (Kroeger, 1996, p. 4). Retirement does not mean that the retired pastor is giving up their calling. It means there will be change. The retired pastor no longer has the rigors of leading a church and can choose the ministry situations they will serve in (Manner, 2017, p. 6). This concept is difficult for many pastors to deal with when considering retirement and to know when to leave. Sanders (1994) writes that “Only one Leader holds office forever; no successor is needed for Him. The disciples made no move to appoint a replacement for Jesus, tacit evidence that they were conscious of His abiding presence. Their living leader and Lord.” (p. 146).

Pastor's Decision to Retire

The literature review moves from a pastor's calling to his decision to retire. The Scriptures have very little to say about the retirement of the clergy. The most prominent Scripture on clergy retirement is found in Numbers 8:23-25. “The LORD spoke to Moses: ‘In regard to the Levites: from 25 years old or more, a man enters the service in the work at the tent of meeting. But at 50 years of age he is to retire from his service in the work and no longer serve. He may assist his brothers to fulfill responsibilities at the tent of meeting, but he must not do the work. This is how you are to deal with the Levites regarding their duties’” (*Holman Christian Standard Bible*, 1999/2004, Numbers 8:23-25) (Rowe, 2019).

The message of Numbers 8:23-25 is important since it provides the only Scripture specifically addressing clergy retirement. According to this Scripture the call of clergy is never-ending and the clergy role changes with age. While at a prescribed age the Levites' tasks were changed, their call was not. The Bible shows that clergy's role changes from a leadership/working role, to a position as mentor, as an assistant, one to come alongside. So, if God's call on a pastor is authentic, no pastor who is physically and mentally able, should retire fully from ministry. However, the pastor retires into a different, less strenuous, necessary type of ministry. They assume a support role, a role that continues as long as they are able.

The decision to retire is one of the most challenging decisions a pastor makes when he approaches retirement age. At the time of retirement, the average pastor has committed most of their life to their calling. Knapp and Pruett (2016) wrote that the difficulty in leaving their calling is because their task has been more than a job or career; it has been an occupation. They suggest that retirement be approached in stages rather than one sudden leap out the door, one day working the next nothing (pp. 33-46). Many pastors first consider their ministry and the impact of their retirement on it. They reflect on the ministry they invested years of their life helping people and the church. In their reflection, they question whether they have a right to retire.

When considering retirement, pastors tend to become personally connected to the church. A result of the pastor's connection with the church is that they handle retirement badly (Bridges, 1980). Bridges conveys that a pastor thinks of retirement and the end and confuses it with finality as if the life of worth is at an end (Bridges, 1980, p. 80). It is common for a pastor to feel as if their worth is devalued in retirement. Our society says, "Here's the door; go rock yourself to death." Unfortunately, the faith community is aligned in a very similar manner (Cottrill, 1994, p.

1). Often retirement from the ministry is compared to death in many ways. Roberts and Freidman (2016) comment that a grieving period and process needs to be planned for (Roberts & Freidman, 2016). And while the retiree is grieving, there is the absence of condolences because his friends congratulate him and tell him how fortunate he is (p. 12). They fail to understand what he is going through.

Leading authorities on leadership encourage leaders to know themselves, be aware of themselves, and find their voice and value (Covey, 2004; Kouzes & Posner, 2002). Kouzes and Posner (2002) suggest that leaders find their voice—their authentic self-grounded in a set of values and ideals voice (p. 393). Posner (2002) suggest that leaders find their voice—their authentic self-grounded in a set of values and ideals voice (p. 393). Gardner (1990) lists four moral goals of leadership:

- releasing human potential
- balancing the needs of the individual and community
- defending the fundamental values of the community
- instilling in individuals a sense of initiative and responsibility (pp.67-80)

Pastors are often so involved with others and the church that they fail to find their voice. They fail to balance the needs of themselves. They forget to be aware of who they are and who they are becoming as time changes.

The retirement of a pastor has another side, that of the people they serve. There are people in congregations who believe that a pastor does not have the right to retire (Vines & Shaddix, 1999). This thought is not strange to pastors considering retirement. A biblical basis for most pastors entering into ministry, in the beginning, is found in Matthew 9:36-38, “Seeing the

people, He felt compassion for them because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd...the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore, beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.” (*New American Standard Bible*, 1909/2005, Matthew 9:36-38). Most pastors consider resigning from their call as abandoning God’s call on their life. Skinner (2008) assessed the pastor’s feelings upon retirement, “retirement brings more time for study and drawing closer to God. however, the process often leads to a time of struggle because the pastor feels desolate, devoid of meaning, and dark” (Skinner, 2008, p. 89).

When pastors retire, they long for contact with people they have served and love. They long for a sense of value and worth. Ambra (2018) writes that there is a common lament among pastors who have retired. It is the absence of researching and preparing a message to preach on Sunday morning (p. 2). They look for opportunities to prepare and deliver a message. As a pastor ages, those appointments to preach become fewer (Ambra, 2018). Roberts (2011) argues that when a pastor retires at the acceptable time to society, they leave during their most influential years. Retiring too early robs younger preachers of the wisdom and knowledge the pastor has gained (p. 48).

Vines (2014) remarked that his desire for retirement is to finish strong. He does not want to become a “bitter old man” (p. 190). Others express this sentiment, and they offer steps to take that will promote a healthy retirement. McKeever (2014) suggests that the retired pastor decides what they want to do with the rest of their life (p. 1). Many authors strongly recommend that all pastors begin planning for retirement early in their ministry experience (Earls, 2019; Rowe, 2019; Vines, 2014). Manners (2017) warns that planning is essential for a successful retirement.

Literature shows that large numbers of pastors are nearing retirement age. Researcher Barna (2017) reports that more pastors are approaching retirement age than people preparing for a career or calling in the ministry. This data points out that most pastors leading churches in America today will face retirement within about 10 years. Every pastor is an interim pastor (Bird, 2014, p. 51).

Most of the literature reviewed linked questions the pastor had about retirement with reflections he had about the future of the church he led. One author boldly states what may well occupy the thought of many pastors when facing retirement. Albers (2012) writes, “I came to the belated realization that growing older is not for ‘sissies’”. There are so many issues that cloud the mind of a pastor thinking about retirement. For many pastors, the thought of no longer having meaning and worth is troubling. Wiebe (1993) holds that this is a challenge and many pastors cope with it by continuing to serve, remaining active as long as possible. However, this may be easier to talk about than to practice when one is no longer pastor. The concern of having value and worth may be driven by society in general. Unrau (2001) reports that secular literature, researched in his study, discriminates against those of retirement age by thinking less of their contributions due to an inability to sufficiently support work. In other words, in the case of retired pastors, they are not able to contribute to the general task of the ministry as a younger person can. The retired pastor’s inability to contribute at the younger person’s level marks him as less valuable to ministry.

Another thought that lay deep in the pastor’s mind appears to be acceptance that they are getting old and diminishing in ability. Cole, Van Tassel, and Kastenbaum (1992) hold that

this is an issue and that the only way to deal with it is to accept that old age brings a deterioration of the body. They write:

Old age requires the acceptance of bodily deterioration, viewed as an opportunity to grow in virtue, for the loss of health and bodily firmness that eventually forces a withdrawal from past activities can open up new horizons of meaning...A meaningful and realistic view consistent with the facts of human decay and mortality, emerges from the tradition of virtue, of moral and spiritual journey...the Christian meaning of growing old emerges from the humble cultivation of faith, hope and love. (pp. 127-130)

These authors comment that when a Christian faces old age, they gain meaning from their spiritual journey and the recognition that the end of life is part of that journey. Cole et al. (1992) comment that the worst evil of all is “arrested development.” Or stated a little differently, the Christian can find worth and value in continuing to believe God has something more for them, and they need to keep growing. Wiebe’s (1993) thoughts are similar. She believes that continuing to think that God has more for them to do, allows the senior person to focus on the being and doing as long as possible and then to focus on being.

There is an abundance of literature on retirement positively punctuating a pastor’s career in ministry. Some pastors look at Acts 2:17, which they interpret as the end of the road for their life-long work as the final segment. Albers describes it well: “When my wife and I began to think and pray seriously about the Lord’s direction regarding retirement, one of the recurring messages was that our congregation was ready for a new set of pastoral eyes and ears, heart and passion” (Albers, 2012, p. 20). He quotes Peter’s message in the upper room on Pentecost when explaining the power of the Holy Spirit, “No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: ‘In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams’”

(*New International Version*, 1973/1984, Acts 2:17). Albers (2012) believes that some of the greatest gifts of God is the ability to dream dreams and retirement was part of the dreams.

But finishing well appears to be more than merely dreaming, as one sitting on a porch overlooking a serene lake on a cool summer night might do. Abe Unrau (2001) surveyed a focus group, part of his research on finishing well, and asked them for their ideas on growing old or maturing well. The focus group developed a list of eight characteristics or convictions about growing old as a pastor:

- 1) The successfully aging pastor will continue to manifest consistent growth and development in all the areas of his God-given interests and ministry.
- 2) He will be involved in a meaningful ministry and he will be esteemed as an elder in the church.
- 3) He will have a keen sense of humor. He will not take himself too seriously and he will be able to see the lighter side of things.
- 4) His ministry will involve mentoring younger pastors and church leaders.
- 5) He will have developed keen listening skills.
- 6) Pastors who age faithfully will continue to have a vibrant outlook on the life and mission of the church.
- 7) Well-being and good health are not the primary indicators of finishing well.
- 8) Pastors who finish well approach death with dignity and anticipation of their graduation into heaven (Unrau, 2001).

Vines and Shaddix (1999) note that many people believe that the Bible does not give the pastor the right to retire. The authors believe this comment is said to keep older people active in the church. People's comments on a pastor's retirement appear to be on the mind of many pastors as they approach their golden years.

Leadership Transitions

The literature review continues from the pastor's decision to retire to the pastor's transition into retirement and a new role. The researcher sought to understand the pastor's transition from active ministry to retirement. The literature focuses on answers to questions about the pastor's retirement. Retirement raises many questions like when to tell the congregation, should the pastor remain at the church they led, the relationship between the former and succeeding pastor, and others were the focus of this literature review.

The literature on transition is abundant. Scripture points to the transition of leadership in Acts 1:4 & 5, 7 & 8, Jesus instructed the Apostles to take over the mission of the church, "On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: 'Do not leave Jerusalem but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' (*New International Version*, 1973/1984, Acts 1:4 & 5). 'You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth'" (*New International Version*, 1973/1984, Acts 1:7 & 8).

Transition in the pastor's case involves moving from a life of doing to a life of being. It moves from a life of serving others to a life of taking time for one's self. This move is a difficult transition. Skinner asserts that pastors often enter into the transition phase with intentions of drawing closer to God and having more time for the Scriptures and prayer. However, the reality is that the process often leads to a depressed spirit (Skinner, 2008, p. 89).

Transitions are more manageable when they have a step-by-step plan and follow it (Robertson, 2008). Transition plans help the pastor think through the letting go process and

moving into the neutral zone. Robertson chose to prepare a transition plan, which included: notifying the congregation, calling an interim pastor, letting go of the ministry, and eventually leaving. A common approach to transition is for the outgoing pastor to help create and set in motion a succession plan and then get out (Bird, 2014, p. 54). Irwin cites a situation in a small town where the choices of churches were slim. The succeeding pastor and retiring pastor developed a transition plan in which the congregation's specific requirements were required if the former pastor were to remain (Irwin, 2017).

There are differing positions on the process of transition. One opinion is to not remain at the ministry until the end, the time of one's retirement (Robertson, 2008). Robertson asked the question, "Was it possible for a lead pastor...to plan for a healthy and positive transition that would enable both pastor and congregation to part, released into a new life?" (p. 35). Her answer to the question resulted in establishing a plan and recommending others to develop a transition plan and stick to it.

Other literature proposes a different strategy. Albers (2012) comments that the transition from being pastor to having a pastor would be a different experience. He would want to remind the pastor to treat him as a vibrant and indispensable part of the body called the church, indicating that he desired to remain at the same church he led (Albers, 2012, p. 21). Robertson chose to prepare a transition plan which, included: notifying the congregation, calling an interim pastor, letting go of the ministry, and eventually leaving. Bird (2014) comments that a common approach is for the outgoing pastor to help create and set in motion a succession plan and then get out (Bird, 2014, p. 54). The differing opinions demonstrate the need for the pastor to think through the transition process.

Danielson (2000) researched pastors successfully following a long-term pastor in leading a church. Indirectly the research results showed that a relationship with the former pastor was necessary for a smooth transition. Danielson's (2000) study noted significant findings in regard to pastoral change. The first was, the choices the retired pastor made in relating to the congregation and supporting the new pastor were more important than whether he or she remained in the church or community; next, a healthy process of grieving and letting go of the predecessor was critical if the congregation was to be able to welcome and follow the new pastor, and; next the incoming pastor's ability to understand the congregation and exert appropriate leadership was essential in each transition studied. Additional findings pointed to the role of the new pastor. First, the strength of the ego undergirds effective leadership; second, love has no substitute; third, self-awareness is needed for effective pastoring; fourth, understanding congregational dynamics is half the battle; and, fifth, persistence can turn the tide (Danielson, 2000, p. v).

Decision on Church to Attend

Arguments for the Pastor Leaving the Church He Led

The literature review begins to narrow its focus to the retired pastor's choice of place to worship and serve. For a former pastor, finding a church to help in is one of the most difficult decisions he faces. The pastor is often seen as an intruder or unwelcome guests at churches when he retires (Harmon, 1987). The arguments behind each of the opinions deal with whose church it is: the former pastors or the succeeding pastor's. Scripture references on this particular point are few and do not specifically address this issue. However, Scripture tells us that Jesus said: "...I will build my church..." (*New International Version*, 1973/1984, Matthew 16:18).

It is essential to understand the issues and dynamics of a pastor's decision to leave or remain at the church they led, once they retire. Sources containing legitimate biblical direction or logical rationale for a pastor staying or leaving a congregation is unavailable. Sources citing opinions of leaders who hold that the retiring pastor needs to leave the church they led are available. For the most part, this literature is not based on biblical rationale. Lamar and Whitmore (1928) comment on pastors remaining at a church they led once the successor has taken the lead. They write: "above all when a pastor leaves a charge let him or her leave it... 'Get out and stay out' is the injunction here" (as cited in Harmon, 1987, p. 72).

Henry Ward Beecher (1819-1887) asserted that it was not good for ministers to associate too much with one another (Lamar & Witmore, 1928, as cited in Harmon, 1987, p. 65). Scripture presents a different picture of all believers associating with each other. The apostle John writes: "But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin." (*New International Version*, 1973/1984, I John 1:7). And Luke writes of the new disciples at Pentecost; "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer" (*New International Version*, 1973/1984, Acts 2:42).

The most challenging and significant action for a pastor remaining at the church they led is letting go of ministry (Albright, 2005). Letting go is difficult for the congregation, saying 'no' is difficult for the retired pastor. These difficulties are the primary reason for the former pastor having to leave the church they led, to allow the new pastor to lead without interference (Irwin, 2017). Mahlberg et al. (2017) comments that in established best practice, the retiring pastor's role is to promote bonding between all congregants and the new pastor or transitional pastor by

getting out of the way. In other words, the retiring pastor can be of no benefit to the church once they have retired. He does not substantiate the origin of ‘established best practice.’

The necessity of a pastor needing to leave the church appears to have some generational ties. Generational ties have influenced the issue of a pastor leaving the church they led.

Generations up until the 1980s have encouraged retiring clergy to make a clean break from previous pastorates, avoiding pastoral duties unless invited by the new pastor (Irwin, 2017).

Arguments for the Pastor Remaining at the Church He Led

Albright (2005) reports that more and more retiring clergy choose to continue living in the community where they have served. However, most clergies choose to support a smooth transition of leadership and “get out of town” (Albright, 2005, p. 19). He commented that the longstanding former pastor’s situation remaining at the church they pastored is possible as long as the relationships between them and the new Leader are healthy. He believes the situation is possible but not easy. Hartung (2011) suggests: “We are connected in the Christian community not simply by bonds of human relationships and goodwill, not simply by bonds of emotion and personal experience, but fundamentally, we are joined together in and through Christ. We celebrate the gifts Christ gives each of us for the good of all of us, and we work to help one another enhance and grow the gifts Christ has given.” (Chapter 5, para. 12).

While the preferred model of pastoral transition is for the retired pastor to leave the church they led, further in the literature, Irwin (2017) presents a case in which the retiring pastor successfully mentored his successor. Irwin called this a success model and added that it defied the practices put in place by denominations. Retired senior pastors have a wealth of

organizational skills, knowledge, relational experience, and many other ministries (Albers, 2012).

Bird (2014) discussed a family plan model for successfully transitioning a retiring pastor to the new lead pastor. In this model, the retiring pastor remains in the church they pastored. The retiring pastor passes the reins of leadership to a son or daughter (Bird, 2014, p. 52).

Remaining at the Church Pastored (Succession)

Finally, the literature focuses on the relationship between the retired pastor, who desires to remain at the church, and the succeeding pastor. The literature also focuses on the relationship of the retiring pastor with the congregation. Robinson (2005) comments that the former or retiring pastor must leave. They must get a life outside the church. He holds that the relationship between the church and the former pastor is too intimate to remain. He writes: “getting out of the church he led is essential because of the personal nature of the pastor-congregation, a relationship that is like no other...what makes the former pastor (and his or her family) stay active in the congregation? Some, of course, pull that off with grace and dignity. Far too many do not (Robinson, 2005, p. 8). Robinson suggests that if the former pastor remains at the church, they must change their relationship with the congregation from one of leader to one of the co-congregants, friends.

Heifetz and Linsky (2017) write about leadership struggles with marginalization; and cite the relationship between the new, young Rabbi and the retired older Rabbi. The two men discussed the retiring Rabbi remaining at the temple. The discussion focused on the retiring Rabbi’s agreement to support the new Leader and not negatively influence the temple

congregants. As time passed, the former Rabbi marginalized his successor. The relationship fell apart from the start, and the temple congregants suffered as a result of it.

Rainer (2015) offers seven rational thoughts about retiring pastors remaining at their churches: 1. Don't expect retired pastors to sever all of their church relationships; 2. If the relationship is healthy with the new pastor, the advantages of having the retired pastor in the church can be numerous; 3. Because the church needs to allow the new pastor to develop an identity as the shepherd/leader, the retiring pastor should take an extended break from the church; 4. The longer the retired pastor's tenure, the longer the break should be from the church; 5. Retired pastors should not try to be the pastor to church members; 6. The retired pastor should not be perceived to be second-guessing the current pastor; and 7. The present pastor should not denigrate the former ministry of the retired pastor (Rainer, 2015). Letting go is the most significant and challenging issue with a pastor remaining at the church they led. It is difficult for the pastor and the congregation and saying 'no' is difficult for the retired pastor. (Albright, 2005). It is natural for the retired pastors and congregation to interact; however, the temptation is to resume the former relationship as pastor/congregant rather than part of the congregation.

Theoretical Framework for the Study

The theological framework for this study provided the biblical foundation on which the research was accomplished. This literature review section provides the theoretical framework and basis for the research to evaluate and understand the complexities of a pastor remaining at or leaving the congregation he served and led when they retire.

This section begins with a review of the literature on decisions facing pastors as they consider retirement. It starts with redefining a calling and moves to the decision to retire. It

moves to the elements of leadership transition and finally to the decision on which church they will or should attend in retirement. Included in refining a pastor's calling is transitioning from full-time leadership to ministry as a retired pastor. The literature narrows down the focus of the deciding on which church to attend and serve in retirement. It then addresses the considerations of remaining at the same church they pastored and the issues associated with such a decision, such as church leadership structure and church polity.

Definition of a Calling

The term, *calling* and its definition, can be traced through antiquity in the languages of the 'great civilizations'; however, it was little understood or expressed (Webber, 2001, p. 40). Martin Luther is believed to have first used the term during the Protestant Reformation (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009, p. 33). Webber notes that Luther was the earliest to use the word, translating the German word *Beruf*, meaning calling, in the Old Testament book Sirach (Ecclesiastes 11:20-21) (p. 40). Rawat (2011) writes that it could be theological or philosophical and notes that the origin varies (p. 2). The expression generally accepted today is attributed to the Reformation and Luther's earliest translation. Webber (2001) writes that it quickly acquired its contemporary significance in all Protestant people's everyday language. He notes that all modern-day Protestants know and believe in the expression (p. 39).

There are many definitions of calling from falling on the side of being divinely inspired or not involving God at all (Rawat, 2011, p. 2). Dik and Duffy's (2009) definition of a calling as a transcendent summons summarizes calling as originating beyond self, as having a role in life that is focused on a sense of purpose beyond one's personal agenda, a purpose that is meaningful

and other-oriented, which is the motivating factor in the person's life (p. 34). This definition demonstrates the universality of the term as it applies to more than clergy.

Bunderson and Thomas (2009), relying mainly on the tradition of the reformers of the expression, render calling to be, "that place in the world of productive work that one was created, designed, or destined to fill by virtue of God-given gifts and talents and the opportunities presented by one's station in life" (p. 33). Both of these definitions hold that the call is from an external source, evoking an inward response to an action, driving the individual to pursue a vocation with purpose, meaning, and a focus on people or other worthwhile, selfless values, and goals.

Calling is a way of defining who one is and giving meaning to their work (Fry, 2003, para 5.1). The Merriam-Webster Dictionary provides two definitions of calling. Its definitions support the premise that calling crosses spiritual and secular bounds. Two definitions are; The first has a connection to divinity: a strong inner impulse toward a particular course of action, especially when accompanied by conviction of divine influence; The second is neutral and void of a religious association: the vocation or profession in which one customarily engages (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). In his introduction, Allen (2016) notes that the term calling is not restricted to clergy occupation (para. 4). Many people not associated with the pastorate believe they have been called to a specific career or profession (Bunderson & Thompson et al., 2009, p. 34).

Literature reveals that calling, in the secular world of employment, is more than performing a job for economic reasons or advancing one's career. Calling is the means of satisfaction in one's occupation (Hall & Chandler et al., 2005, pp. 157-176). According to Fry

(2003) spiritual leadership constructs are sought in secular leadership at an 'increasing and accelerated' rate (section 4, para 1). A research study involving zookeepers, conducted by Bunderson and Thompson (2009) substantiates the importance of calling when one is choosing an occupation. Zookeepers, whose job rewards were few and whose tasks were less than glamorous, were extremely satisfied with their jobs. Ninety-one percent of those involved in the study believed they were called to their occupation (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009, p. 5).

Literature also suggests that calling may be the essential element to meaningful work (Webber, 1930, p. 40, para. 2). It has been called the strongest, most extreme, deepest, foundational element of a successful career (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009, p. 2; also see Bellah et al., 1985; Dobrow, 2004; Hall & Chandler, 2005; Ecker, 2018). Although the secular world is aware of the term and many people believe they have a specific calling, task, or occupation they were made to accomplish, the term is more prevalent within the Protestant community of faith.

While the expression has gained popularity and meaning among many in secular occupations, as well as among Protestant believers (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009), literature records the extreme value of the call to the pastor and the church (Lucas, 1989; Bridges, 2012). To be called to ministry means called to a ministry-focused vocation, not merely to minister, which all Christians have been called, biblically, to do (Allen, 2016, para. 8). Often vocational choice has not been made by the person but pursued by them due to the powerful external influence on their heart and mind. Spurgeon (1889) wrote: "No man may intrude into the sheepfold as an under-shepherd; he must have an eye to the chief Shepherd, and wait his beck and command. Or ever a man stands forth as God's ambassador, he must wait for the call from above..." (p. 19). For the pastor, unlike those feeling called in the secular world, the call from

God is everything and requires everything in return. The call from God is the starting point from which a person's life is totally changed.

The Purpose of a Call

While the origin of calling is questioned and uncertain, there is more than substantial agreement regarding the purpose of a call. The purpose of a call involves service, service to other people, service to the community, service to society, service, which will add value and contribute to well-being (Dik & Duffy, 2009; Pinzer, 2017; Rawat, 2011).

The literature reviewed on one's calling includes the conditions, purpose, and permanence of such a calling. Peace and fulfillment derive from this discovery. However, the pursuit of one's vocation can be costly; because it can lead to our being separated from people who are close to us and set apart for the work of the Kingdom of God (Hans Urs Von Balthasar, as cited in Secomb, 2015). The literature on a study of a person in the ministry was a memorable moment with a specific event and a realization that marked the point that started the journey towards Christian ministry (Steeves, (2017). It is important to understand the influence of pastors calling when considering the phenomenon of being required to leave the church they led.

The literature points to the premise that responding to God's call is costly and built on a relationship (Schindler, 2004, pp. 325-338). Obedience to the call will be costly, for it will entail following Jesus in his way of the cross. It requires a state of being, modeled on John the Baptist, whereby one allows oneself to decrease so that God within might increase (John 3:30) (Secomb, 2015, p. 83).

The Decision to Retire

When a person approaches retirement age, there are several significant factors that they consider. However, people live longer and work beyond 65 years of age (United States Census Bureau, 2017; Reday-Mulvey, 2005). Many factors, such as gender, marriage, finances, and health, influence a person's decision to retire. Reitzes et al. (1998) comment that retirement has become a stage of life. As a person approaches the retirement stage, they consider retirement as an alternative to work (Reitzes et al., 1998, pp. 607-608). Retirement is a stressful and sometimes difficult period in a person's life. Oakman and Howie (2013) discuss how organizations help their employees determine when the time is right for them to retire. A growing shortage of skilled employees is a contributing factor in the organization's desire to assist its employees in retirement planning. The organization is endeavoring to urge older employees to work a little longer (Oakman & Howie, 2013).

When a pastor resigns from a church's leadership, he seldom decides in haste (Lohnes, 2008). Literature shows that there are many questions which a pastor and family have about healthy ways for clergy to bow out of spiritual leadership. Every pastor must address the issue of quitting while we still have the energy to reconnect with family after a life of working overtime. They must also consider their finances and whether they should continue to work into their seventies. This study addressed other options for older clergy who, with lengthening lifespans and professional vigor, may be ready to slow down but not ready to quit. (Irwin, 2017, p. 21).

Bridges (1980) presents the idea that most clergies do a poor job preparing for retirement. He discusses the possibilities and dangers faced when one approaches life's changes:

Considering that we have to deal with endings all our lives, most of us handle them very badly. This is in part because we misunderstand them and take them either too seriously or not seriously enough. We take them too seriously by confusing them with finality – that’s it, all over, never more, finished! We see them as something without sequel, forgetting that in fact they are the first phase of the transition process and a precondition of self-renewal. At the same time, we fail to take them seriously enough. Just because they scare us, we try to avoid them. (p. 90)

He presents a good argument for considering the impact of retired senior pastors on ministry.

They are a ready source that can benefit the local church and ministry in general.

The literature points to the importance of self-awareness in being effective and seeing one’s self through change. Self-awareness enables us to stand apart and examine even how we see ourselves—our self-paradigm, the most fundamental paradigm of effectiveness (Covey, 2004, pp. 66-67). The concept of self-awareness may be a critical element of preparing for retirement.

Cottrill (1994) comments on the issue of retirement, such as a retired person’s feelings. A familiar sense of healthy persons retiring is that of being thrown away or of being useless. The society contributes to the useless feelings in the way they treat the retired person. Unfortunately, the faith community is aligned in a very similar manner (Cottrill 1994, p. 1). Cottrill focused on renaming retirement. “Redirection” is a more positive word than retirement. It sends the message that life is not over, only the end of the work career. Other literature records that when a pastor retires, he is not retiring from ministry but only from his ministry at a local church (Brunson & Bryant, 2007, p. 188).

Hall (1986) reflects on the differing thoughts of people concerning the pastor’s retirement. The idea of a pastor not retiring appears to be on many pastors’ minds as they approach their golden years. It is sometimes filled with regrets and traumatic emotions.

Literature reveals that some pastors retire to be able to improve their personal lives, to reflect, study, meditate. Literature also speaks about retirement causing reflections of the ministry. “Is there anything in eternity, Lord, that even compares to kneeling beside someone at this mourner’s bench who is finding forgiveness for sin and accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior?” (Criswell, 1980, p. 248-250).

Leadership Transitions

The transition from leadership to retirement is one of the most difficult changes in the retirement process. People experience a three-phase process defined as a transition. They internalize and come to terms with the detail of the new situation that change brings about. The three phases are: (1.) The Ending: Letting go of the old ways and old identity people had. (2.) The Neutral Zone: Going through an in-between time when the old is gone, but the new isn’t fully operational. (3.) New Beginning: Coming out of the transition and making a new beginning (Bridges, 2003, pp. 1-5). Zuieback, 2012 outlined a seven-principle process for managing transition:

1. One must have an end before they can have a beginning. The leader must recognize and accept that they are no longer in the role they once had.
2. Between the ending and new beginning there is a hiatus. This is a time of difficulty when reality sets in and the person is trying to work through loss, perceived or real. This is a time when the person needs temporary support to help rebuild a sense of control.
3. The hiatus can be a creative time when new things and practices can be introduced more quickly and easily.
4. The transition is developmental. This is a time when a new chapter of life can begin to take shape.

5. The transition is the source of renewal. This is like a second breath for the person in transition.
6. People go through transition at different speeds and in different ways.
7. People listen more, talk less, slow down (Zuieback, 2012, pp. 12-13).

Transition in a pastor's case involves moving from a life of doing to a life of being. It moves from a life of serving others to a life of taking time for one's self. Albers (2012) would remind the pastor to treat the retiring pastor as a vibrant and indispensable part of the body called the church, indicating that he desired to remain at the same church he led (Albers, 2012, p. 21).

Scripture addresses transition as Jesus turned the ministry over to the Apostles as recorded in Acts 1:4, 5, and 8: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (*New International Version*, 1973/1984, Acts 1:4,5, 8). Skinner asserts that pastors often enter into the transition phase with intentions of drawing closer to God. This phase will be a period of spending more time in Scriptures and prayer. However, the reality is that the process often leads to "the dark night of the soul," because the pastor feels desolate, devoid of meaning, and dark (Skinner, 2008, p. 89).

Transitions are easier when the person has a step by step plan and follows it (Robertson, 2008). Plans help the pastor think through the first step of the process and move into the neutral zone. Robertson chose to prepare a transition plan, which included: notifying the congregation, calling an interim pastor, letting go of the ministry, and eventually leaving. A common approach

to transition is for the outgoing pastor to help create and set in motion a succession plan and then get out (Bird, 2014, p. 54). Irwin cites a situation in a small town where the choices of churches were slim. The succeeding pastor and retiring pastor developed a transition plan in which certain congregation requirements were necessary if the former pastor remained (Irwin, 2017).

Studies have shown that the retired pastor's choices in relating to the congregation and supporting the new pastor were more important than whether they remained in the church or community. They have also shown that a healthy process of grieving and letting go of the former pastor was critical if the congregation was to welcome and follow the new pastor. Each transition studied also indicated that it was essential for the incoming pastor to understand the congregation and exert appropriate leadership. Additional findings pointed to the role of the new pastor. The new pastor must understand five elements required to have a successful transition: First, the strength of the ego undergirds effective leadership; Second, love has no substitute; Third, effective pastoring needs self-awareness; Fourth, understanding congregational dynamics is half the battle; and, Fifth, persistence can turn the tide (Danielson, 2000, p. v).

The literature demonstrates that the transition from a pastor into retirement is often stressful and challenging. People do not like ending things; however, for new things to start old things must end. Before a new way of doing things can be learned, the old ways have to be unlearned. Before a person can become a different kind of person, they must let go of their former identity. So, beginnings depend on endings (Bridges, 2003, p. 23).

Remaining at the Church Pastored (Succession)

Vanderbloemen and Bird (2014) define succession planning as the intentional process of transferring leadership, power, and authority from the one-directional leader to another (p. 14).

They support the idea that such planning should begin early on. The planning for the day of retirement, succession planning, maybe the most significant leadership task a leader and church will ever face (Vanderbloemen, & Bird, 2014). Succession planning is not merely for the exchange of the leadership, but the entire organization. While formal definitions of succession planning have evolved from a singular definition focused on the development and replacement of a sole individual (Lopez-Molina, 2008) to much broader definitions today that include development of multiple employees for multiple positions (Byham, Smith, & Paese, 2002; Fulmer & Conger, 2004; Rothwell, 2005), the purpose of succession planning has remained focused on long-term organizational and leadership sustainability (Richards, 2009, p. 1).

A review of business literature defines succession planning as a means of identifying critical management positions, starting at the project manager and supervisor levels, and extending up to the highest position in the organization (Rothwell, 2005, p. 10). Succession plans are only part of the successful transition of a retired pastor to the new church pastor. The literature reviewed suggests that the most significant pitfall of traditional succession management programs is a lack of follow-through on development plans (Byham, n.d. p. 5).

Finally, literature discusses five reasons succession plans fail:

1. Pastors don't let go; they hang on and interfere with their successor achieving recognition as the leader.
2. Pastors wait too long before deciding to leave. The church is often in too much of a decline when they decide to leave.
3. Multiple candidates fight it out. This leaves the congregation confused, disheartened, and vacating.

4. Changes come too quickly. The successor hears the congregation call for change and acts too fast making significant change.
5. Pastors have hidden landmines. The successor uncovers hidden secrets such as moral issues or huge debt or conditions left by the former pastor (Bird, 2014, p. 50).

Not all succession plans involving retired pastors are negative. Many authors note the values of the retired senior pastor (Bird, 2014; Robertson, 2008; Albright, 2005; Albers, 2012). The former senior pastor can aid the successor pastor in transitioning into leadership. The RSP can mentor younger members of the congregation. They can be an influence in the church to promote the succeeding pastor's plan and vision.

Rationale for Study and Gap in the Literature

The purpose of this interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) study was to explore the lived experience of retired senior pastors concerning their perceived impact on the ministry of the American evangelical Protestant church. It is important to evaluate the available literature to understand the perceived impacts. The rationale behind this study is three-fold. First, there is a pending shortage of lead pastors in American evangelical Protestant churches. Research shows that within 10 years, more than 50 percent of all lead pastors in America will retire or be close to retirement (Barna, 2017). Retired pastors have a wealth of experience and knowledge. They may be a valuable asset in support to lead pastors in ministries by assuming some of the time consuming, non-leadership tasks that occupy a great deal of the lead pastor's time. Ignoring their wealth of information may exacerbate the pending pastor shortage issue. Second, it is important to have an in-depth understanding of the retired pastor's influence in the community and church. Third, it is vital to understand the retired pastor's propensity for ministry and involvement following retirement.

Literature Review Conclusion

This literature review set out to understand the rationale behind the phenomenon that when a pastor decides to retire, they must leave the church they led. The review began with a search for literature on the topic of retirement, with the focus on retiring pastors. Two significant considerations under the case of retirement were: the decision to retire; and the determination of a church to worship and serve as a volunteer. The study included an understanding of the pastor's call and reflection of that call as the pastor changes role from doing to being, from leading to following, from pastoring to having a pastor, and the decision to remain at the church they led.

The literature reviewed provided many options and opinions about a pastor's church choice to worship and serve in upon retirement. However, literature failed to provide a basis supporting why it would be necessary for a pastor to leave a church they led and find another place where they could serve and worship. This gap in the literature supports the need for further research.

Profile of the Current Study

The study's focus was an exploration of the perceived impact of retired senior pastors on the ministry. The literature review provided a strong theological and theoretical foundation for the study, demonstrating a gap in literature sufficient to warrant the study. Existing literature dances around both sides of a pastor's phenomenon remaining or being required to leave the church they led. However, the choice the retired senior pastor makes should have little impact on ministry.

The study's value was seen in the potential value of retiring pastors remaining active in ministry at a local church following retirement. The literature review demonstrated that there would be a shortage of pastors in evangelical Protestant churches of America within 10 years due to retirements. It was important to explore retired senior pastor's lived experience with respect to their perceived value to the ministry.

The study will use a qualitative research method with an interpretive phenomenological analysis design. This design uses the interview process for data collection from first hand, lived experience from the purposively selected participants. The data undergo extensive review, sorting, and coding, comparing all participants' lived experiences, and searching for dominant themes. Chapter three provides a detailed explanation of interpretive phenomenological analysis and the planned research process.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Individuals know themselves and their experiences more intimately than any other person. Therefore, they must be allowed to share their experiences without interference, bias, or outside influence and persuasion. Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) describe this sharing as phenomenological, the exploring of experiences in its own terms (p. 9). It is “going back to the things themselves” (Husserl, 2020 P. 10), the firsthand experiences from the participants. It is the culmination of the researcher’s perception and description of the participants’ lived experiences with respect to a certain phenomenon (Creswell, 2014).

Retired senior pastors face an enormous amount of emotional stress when they retire from full time ministry. There is an inner conflict between their calling and need to retire (Gaultiere, 2019). Most of them continue to be used in some element of ministry following retirement (Manners, 2020; Rainer, 2020; Smith, 2003). This study explored the lived experience of retired senior pastors with respect to their perceived impact on the ministry of the American evangelical Protestant church. For this study to have value the researcher accessed the lived experience of retired senior pastors in an effort to draw out the rich details of such experiences. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was the choice method of research for the study since it is focused on how people make sense of their major life experiences (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009).

This chapter discusses the elements of the research which were employed in answering the research questions and shed light on the phenomenon that retired senior pastors continue involvement in ministry following retirement. Included in this chapter is a discussion of the

research questions, the research method, the population, sampling, and data-analysis used in this research. Lastly, the discussion addresses the validity of the research.

Research Design Synopsis

The Problem

Barna Group research (2017) paints a picture of a pending shortage of pastors to fill the pulpits in evangelical Christian churches of America within 10 years. Retired senior pastors (RSP) have a wealth of knowledge and years of experience leading churches, which may be lost when they retire. Understanding the benefits to ministry of having the knowledge, wisdom, and experience of a RSP has not been studied in detail. Without this knowledge a valuable resource for the evangelical churches of America may be lost or limited.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this interpretative phenomenological analysis study was to explore the lived experience of retired senior pastors with respect to their perceived impact on the ministry of the American evangelical Protestant church. The study sought data on both phenomena, the impact of retired senior pastors remaining at the local church they led, and the impact of retired senior pastors leaving the local church they led.

Research Questions

The following research questions were used as the guide for this study.

RQ1. What, if any, are the signs that tell a retired senior pastor whether they should remain at or should leave the church they led when they?

RQ2. What, if any, is the perceived impact to the ministry if the retired senior pastor leaves the local church they led?

RQ3. What, if any, is the perceived impact to ministry if the retired senior pastor remains at the local church they led?

RQ4. What, if any, are the issues when a retired senior pastor is involved in the local church ministry?

RQ5. What, if any, are the benefits for the succeeding pastor if a retired senior pastor is involved in ministry?

Research Design and Methodology

This study was exploratory in nature. It examined first hand data from those retired pastors who had lived experience in ministry following retirement. Due to the cognitive nature of the potential conflicts in the minds of the retired pastor and succeeding pastor, there is a lack of qualitative data concerning the real-life experiences of the pastors in such arrangements. For these reasons Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), a type of phenomenological design a qualitative research method was used.

Interpretative phenomenological analysis is open ended and semi-structured (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). It involved an interview process in which the researcher used open ended questions to draw out the lived experience of the participants. The process allowed the participant freedom to tell their story in their own time, manner, and freedom. The interview questions asked of the participants were framed in such a manner that they encouraged and enabled participants to freely and meaningfully share their experiences which were beneficial in answering the research questions.

Interview Settings

The research was accomplished in the participants' natural setting via video conferencing using Zoom conferencing software. The setting selection was based on the participants desired

location, having video conferencing capability. All participants were retired from evangelical Protestant churches in America. The study involved candidates from a number of states, based on responses to the initial invitation to participate in the study. An expert panel of three retired senior pastors evaluated the process, research and interview questions. The interview process and questions were modified based on the input of the expert panel.

Participants

The research population from which participants were drawn was as follows: Candidates were retired senior pastors from evangelical Protestant churches in America, having retired within the last ten years (2010-2020); Candidates had experienced remaining actively involved in ministry, either at the local church they led prior to retirement or at a different ministry. Participants were in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ the Lord. No candidate was selected who was requested to leave the church they led for disciplinary, moral, or ethical reasons. The candidates were given an initial survey to determine if they met the qualifications for the research. A copy of the initial candidate survey questions is included in Appendix A.

The total number of participants for the research study was 10. IPA generally focuses on a smaller number of participants (Smith et al., 2009). The primary concern of IPA was obtaining rich, detailed account of individual experience. The issue was quality, not quantity, and given the complexity of most human phenomena, IPA studies usually benefit from a concentrated focus on a small number of cases (Smith et al., 2009). The desired mix of participants was to have half of the participants having lived experiences with ministry while remaining at the church they pastored following retirement and half of the participants having lived experiences with ministry after leaving the church they led up until retirement. This Mix was not obtained, however

valuable data was gained with the mix of participants used in the research. Participants were selected on the basis that they could grant access to a particular perspective on the phenomena under study (Smith et al., 2009.) The participants for the study were purposively selected from those meeting the requirement, determined from the candidate surveys.

The candidate sample pool was drawn from the input of names of retired senior pastors provided by the snowball strategy. The snowball strategy was based on soliciting the advice and help of participants to influence other, homogeneous, members of join the research study. Third party pastor acquaintances and evangelical Protestant denominations were contacted and provided a wide variety and significant number of participants.

Each candidate was contacted and informed about the planned research. They were assured that confidentiality would be guarded, and informed that in the event they were not selected for the study, their personal information and responses to the initial survey would be destroyed. No candidates responded to question number eight negatively, therefore, no candidates were eliminated from the selection of potential participants. The participant selection was purposively based on responses to the initial candidate questions. Pre-determined steps were taken to protect the confidentiality of each participants. The use of pseudonyms in place of the participants names protected the participants. All data has been stored in thumb drives and on the researcher's computer. Only the researcher has access to the names of participants.

The interview site was more than a location to draw information out of the participant. The site assisted the participant in feeling free to openly share their heart since the site was of their choosing (Elwood & Martin, 2000). Only in this way were the participants be able to truly

express their own ideas and reflections of what happened as they recalled their lived experience (Smith et al., 2009).

The Role of the Researcher

Choosing qualitative research, the researcher was responsible for all aspects of the research. He was the primary instrument for conducting the research. The researcher was responsible for monitoring and reducing bias, developing a standard of competency in the research method, collecting and analyzing the data first hand, and, presenting the findings without bias. He was to qualitative research what statistics, instruments, and design are to quantitative research. Qualitative research is dependent on the integrity of the researcher (Capella University, n.d.).

The social sciences criteria behind this qualitative research study was in seeking to understand meaning rather than gathering large amounts of data. This was accomplished by the one-on-one relationship between the researcher and participant (subject-subject) and the researcher and phenomenon (subject-phenomenon) (Englander, 2012), in the interview process. The researcher used research questions to form basis for the interview sub-questions, which assisted the researcher in remaining focused on the research topic. This was the primary data collection method. Following data collection, the researcher organized, categorized, and analyzed the data (Creswell, 2014). The researcher prepared the final research findings and suggested optional future research.

Throughout the study the researcher was conscious of potential bias. The researcher remained at the church he led prior to retirement. He was involved in discipling and mentoring the succeeding senior pastor. A number of safeguards against bias were taken throughout this

research. The researcher entered the study without a preconceived opinion of what the data would reveal. The interviews were personal, one-on-one with no other people involved. A series of well-thought-out questions were asked of all participants. The process and questions were presented to a panel of experts for validation. The researcher's interpretations and understandings of their stories were reviewed with the participants for accuracy.

Ethical Considerations

With respect to ethics in research, the essence of APA Standard 6.06-6.26 is summarized in the requirement that, "psychologists conduct research competently and with due concern for the dignity and welfare of participants" (Cone & Foster, 2006). This was the edict the researcher followed in relationship with the participants of the research. Irina Bobeica (n.d.) explains that ethical standards protect the research from the manipulation of data for the purpose of falsifying the results. It is the tool used to protect and promote truth and knowledge in quantitative research. Ethical principles are primarily concerned with protecting the research participants and communities.

In qualitative research the researcher must anticipate ethical issues which may arise during the research study. Creswell, (2014) comments that writing about these anticipated ethical issues is required in making an argument for a study, as well as being an important topic in the format for proposals (p. 92). A solicitation for approval sent to the IRB (see Appendix B). This research was granted IRB approval with respect to the ethical considerations.

With respect to this research, the protection of the participants, university, and researcher was considered in assessing ethical concerns. No adolescents were involved or impacted by this research study. Prior to the initial interview with participants, their rights to privacy, physical

safety, and emotional well-being, as well as their right to withdraw from the study at any time up to the writing of the report, was discussed prior to beginning any topic of the research. Each participant signed an informed consent form. Two participants left the study prior to completion of the study. Their data was removed from the study and destroyed. (Smith, et. al., 2009). In addition to the initial written informed consent, ethics promoted an ongoing evaluation of consent throughout the research process (Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynaden, 2001). In two incidents during interviews with participants, it was necessary to briefly discuss ethics. The consent included issues of access, gate-keeping and informed consent. The information included on the informed consent form is shown in Appendix C. No public disclosure of personal information was made. Pseudonyms were used in place of participants names and locations. No data containing personal or sensitive information, was provide to any person outside the research. The researcher was the sole person having personal participant information.

Data Collection Methods and Instruments

Following approval by the researcher's dissertation supervisor and the Liberty University Institutional Review Board, the researcher convened an expert panel to discuss the research participant interview questions, protocol, and research in general. The panel was asked to evaluate the protocol with respect to clarity, flow, and suggestions for improving it. They evaluated the participant questions with respect the following criteria; First, were the questions confusing, which ones and how might they be better stated? Second, were any of the questions leading or bias? If so, which ones and how might they be reworded? Third, were there other questions or feedback which will benefit the research? Based on the response from the expert

panel, the protocol and questions were revised, as necessary. The research began by contacting the participants and scheduling interviews with them.

Collection Methods

Data collection, analysis, and report writing cannot be viewed as individual elements of the research process (Creswell, 2014). In other-words they are interwoven throughout the research. There was continual movement between the transcripts, audio recordings of the interview and data analysis, in an effort to assure the accuracy of the research.

Instruments and Protocols

The primary instrument used in this research was the researcher (Creswell, 2014; Tan, Wilson, & Olver, 2009). The researcher used a protocol, prepared prior to beginning the research, as an important tool to aid in collecting data for the study. The interview was the primary method of data collection.

Protocol.

The protocol aided the researcher in assuring the interview remained focused on the research questions, and the participant and their story. The protocol was considered to be a structured guide to assist the researcher through the data collection process. It contained open-ended sub-questions which were used to encourage the participant in sharing their story. The order of the questions and even the questions themselves were altered, and in some interviews changed, throughout the course of the research process, based on the participant's responses.

The protocol included a process flow with eight to 10 open-ended sub-question (included in Appendix D), a final thank you statement in appreciation for the time spent, and a time for the researcher to gather their thoughts, log interview data and notes (Creswell, 2014, p. 194), and

anything which the researcher deemed important to support the interview and the participants ability to tell their story. Additionally, the preparation of the protocol assisted the interviewer in thinking explicitly about what to expect from the interview (Smith et al., 2009). It enabled the researcher and participant to engage in a dialogue whereby the initial interview questions were modified in light of the participant's responses. The investigator was able enquire about other interesting areas which arose in the course of the interview ((Smith et al., 2009, p. 83). The researcher was thoroughly familiar with the protocol prior to beginning the interview process.

Interviews

IPA benefited from a detailed engagement with a small sample size, from assessing the chosen phenomenon from more than one perspective, or at more than one time-point, and from the creative and reflective efforts of the participants. This was possible because of the eidetic picture of the phenomenon formed by each of the participants in recalling their lived experience. Out of the individual eidetic pictures surfaced the significant themes describing the phenomenon (Englander, 2012).

The interview was the primary data collection process. ((Smith et al., 2009, pp. 82-83). It was the best means for accessing the rich, detailed, first-person accounts of interviewee's experiences. The quality of the research was dependent on the ability of the researcher to accurately interpret the participants lived experience through their use of words, language, and pauses, and to accurately organize the collective research data to reflect on the phenomena. One-on-one interviews yielded the highest response rates because the interviewer and participant were able to establish a rapport with one another (Leedy, 2013). It was through the interview that the

researcher became acquainted with the phenomenon via the participants description (Englander, 2012).

In collecting data, the interviewer showed respect for the interviewee. This was accomplished through honesty, paying attention to the interviewee's emotional and stress status, avoiding intentional exploitation, and not collecting harmful information (Creswell, 2014). The aim was to help the participants recall and unite the different experiences having a common connection into the common meaning (Smith et al., 2009).

The interviewer used open-ended sub-questions to aid in keeping the interview focused. He was careful not lead the participant. Allowing them to tell their story in their own way was vital to the research. Each interview was planned to last approximately 30 minutes, depending on the interviewee's ability to withstand the time without becoming fatigued. Most participants required more than 30 minutes to tell their story. Each participant was asked the same set of interview questions; however, protocol questions were modified to accommodate the participants' differences. Standardized questions helped to remove the interviewer judgement (IndianScribe, 2018).

The interview questions were based on the research questions and served the purpose of narrowing the focus to the phenomenon being researched. The interviewer administered them while keeping the interview open-ended focus. One-three sub-questions were prepared for each research question. Each of them helped to direct the discussion along the path of the research. They were structured to encourage the participant to share their story, personally, and freely on each of element of the phenomenon.

There were a few times in the interview process where the participant became silent. In a normal conversation, one would often take such silence as a cue to speak about one's own experiences or belief. The interviewer considered those times of silence and waited for the participant a little longer. Often the pause allowed the participants think about what they have said and pick up the topic again. The interviewer's silence signaled that he was waiting for more detail. The interview questions helped to reduce the number of silent periods (Smith et al., 2009, p. 97).

To prepare for a successful interview, necessary for a valid analysis, the researcher employed an expert team to assess a practice run interview. The practice run consisted of interviewing a panel expert, listening attentively, and effectively using sub-questions to keep the participant focused on the topic. The results of the practice assisted the interviewer in being a good listener, allowing the participant freedom and time to talk.

Smith, et. al., (2009) believe that unless the interviewer engages deeply with the participant and their concerns, and has listened attentively, and probed in order to learn more about the participants lifeworld, the data will be too thin for analysis (p. 85). Both the interviewer and the interviewee are active participants in the research process. However, the interviewee is the experiential expert on the phenomenon. The researcher sensed a deep relationship with most of the participants. He experienced the lived experience of each participant and this produced an understanding of the participants story by the researcher.

Procedures

Data Recording Procedures

The overall data collection process was accomplished through the following steps: All interviews were via video conferencing using Zoom conferencing software. The interviews were video and audio recorded, with the written approval of the participants. Participant approval was through the use of signed informed consent forms. The interviewer listened attentively to the participant's account of the phenomenon. The settings were the participants choice to helping the participant feel safe, comfortable, and at ease. Each interview was transcribed and reviewed against the video and audio recordings for accuracy. Otto.ai transcription software was employed to transcribe all recorded interviews. No participant information given to another person to transcribe.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process was multi-level. Creswell (2014) described it as a seven-level process (p. 197) and Smith, et. al. (2009) described it as a six-level process (pp. 114-115). The steps followed in this research were from the bottom upward, data was gathered through transcripts and audio recordings, and field notes; it was organized and prepared for analysis; transcripts were read and re-read, and audio recordings were listened to multiple times; data was coded by hand or using NVivo 12 computer program; themes and descriptions were sought; interrelating themes/descriptions were identified; and interpreting the meaning of themes/descriptions were accomplished (Creswell, 2014, pp. 114-115).

Analysis Method

The first step in analyzing data was become immersed in the original data. This required reading the transcripts, studying, thinking about the participants voice and expressions, and listening to audio recordings of the interview. The transcribed interviews underwent content analysis to systematically identify thematic patterns from the interviews. Content analysis was accomplished using the NVivo 12 Content Analysis software program to analyze the transcriptions. The key themes were coded with respect to the research questions. Following the initial content analysis and coding the themes were reevaluated for more substantial themes relating to the research topic. This process was repeated by hand and computer until conclusions were made about the data and research.

The analysis was time consuming and detailed. It examined the semantic content and language used on an exploratory level. The analyst noted inflections in voice and emphasis on particular topics and other thing of interest within the transcript. This step helped the researcher become more familiar with the interview data and transcripts. The more the transcripts were analyzed the more familiar the interviewer became with the story. This resulted in more content from the interview surfacing. No decisions were made as to the meaning or impact of the interview at that point. Familiarity with the data was the desired outcome of this process. Out of these steps a descriptive core of comments, a clear phenomenological focus arose (Smith, et. al., 2009).

The next step was the interpretation of the notes and transcripts. Interpreting the transcripts involved looking at the language that the participant used; thinking about the context

of their live world; and identifying more abstract concepts that helped make sense of the patterns of meaning in their account (Smith et al., 2009).

The process of analyzing data utilized audio and video recordings and data from the content analysis software. Permission to use these forms of data was received in writing from the appropriate person prior to acceptance by the researcher. The analysis process involved descriptive comments, linguistic comments, and conceptual concepts.

The next step was identifying emergent themes. Emergent themes surfaced when each of the steps were evaluated as a unit, combined with each other. The data included participants story in their own words, the notes of the interviewer, the assessments of the interviewer. This larger data set formed the focus of the next stage of analysis (Smith et al., 2009). The analysis changed from review, sorting and coding, to reducing the volume of detail while maintaining the complexity, in terms of mapping connections, patterns, and interrelationships between exploratory notes. The focus at that point was on the initial notes. This turned the initial notes into themes by focusing on the most valuable statements. The focus captured what was crucial in the text.

The final step was to search for connections across emergent themes (Smith et al., 2009). This step organized the themes to determine which answered the research questions and which were discarded. Data determined not to be of use for this research has been secured and will be maintained for a period of time by the researcher.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in qualitative research was defined in the terms, credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability (Geer, 2016; Cope, 2014). The culmination of these

four essentials, form the trustworthiness of the research. Trustworthiness was seen when the data findings were recognized by the reader as the position of the participants in the research.

Credibility

Credibility is the how confident the qualitative researcher is in the truth of the research study's findings. This boils down to the question of "How do you know that your findings are true and accurate?" The researcher used triangulation to show the research study's findings were credible (StatisticsSolutions, 2019).

The research was laid out in such a manner that by triangulation using 10 different participants at different locations, substantiated the credibility of the research. Credibility was also accomplished by the researcher's close attention to the interviewee during the interview, detailed evaluation of the transcripts, listening to the recordings, and evaluating each participant's story in relationship with the other participants. This required the interviewer to engage with the participant, paying attention to words, emotions, pauses, and anything that appears out of the ordinary with the participant (Cope, 2014, pp.89-90).

Dependability

Dependability is the extent that the study could be repeated by other researchers and that the findings would be consistent. In other words, if a person wanted to replicate the study, they should have enough information from the research report to do so and obtain similar findings produced by the research. A qualitative researcher can use inquiry audit in order to establish dependability, which requires an outside person or persons to review and examine the research process and the data analysis in order to ensure that the findings are consistent and could be

repeated (StatisticsSolutions, 2019; Cope, 2014). This review was accomplished by a panel of experts, retired pastors who had experience in subject matter of this research.

Using the same questions, including the questions and their sequence used in the data collection and analysis, a qualified researcher, using inquiry audit is able to replicate the study. The interview questions were structured so as to reflect the research topic. The responses to the questions provided the data to answer the research questions. The validity of the questions demonstrated how well the results measured what they were intended to measure (Sauro, 2014). The research conducted in many locations across the United States, will produce the same results. Care is required in selecting participants who meet the requirement of this research.

Confirmability

Confirmability is the degree of neutrality in the research study's findings. In other words, this means that the findings are based on participants' responses and not any potential bias or personal motivations of the researcher. This involves making sure that researcher bias does not skew the interpretation of what the research participants said to fit a certain narrative. To establish confirmability, the researcher provided an audit trail, which highlighted each step of data analysis in order to provide a rationale for the decisions made. This helped establish that the research study's findings accurately portray participants' responses (StatisticsSolutions, 2019).

Confirmability was an area this researcher diligently guarded against. The researcher took the following steps to protect against interviewer bias: additional time spent analyzing the transcripts and audio recordings of the participants account of their lived experience; transcripts were recorded by the interviewer and listened to while reading the transcription of the

participant's story (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). No discrepancies were found which required a re-evaluation of the process to guard against interviewer bias.

Transferability

Transferability is how the qualitative researcher demonstrates that the research study's findings are applicable to other contexts. In this case, "other contexts" can mean similar situations, similar populations, and similar phenomena. Qualitative researchers can use thick description to show that the research study's findings can be applicable to other contexts, circumstances, and situations (StatisticsSolutions, 2019).

Transferability was demonstrated by the manner in which the research was planned. Ten participants from locations across the United States, different churches, and different interview settings, were interviewed using the same process with the same questions and sequence. This process proved to be sufficient to demonstrate transferability within the evangelical Christian churches of America. While this research may apply to other denominations, religions, non-evangelical churches, or churches in other nations, transferability was not demonstrated through this research.

Chapter Three Summary

This chapter provided a preliminary picture of the methods and procedures which were used as a springboard in preparing the final research plan which was submitted for approval. The research method was Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). After reviewing all of the quantitative methods, IPA was selected for evaluation of a phenomenon involving individuals, past and present, to best capture the lived experiences of individuals in their own words. In other-words, the participants told their own story in their own words and their own way in a non-

intrusive setting. The researcher was the instrument, the interviewer, listener, recorder, and analyst. The researcher had a number of significant roles. The primary role was to listen to the participant tell their story and take accurate, well document, transcriptions of the participants words, thoughts, and posture.

The study was to explore the lived experience of retired senior pastors with respect to their perceived impact on the ministry in American evangelical Protestant churches following retirement. The two sides of the research and participants were; the retired senior pastor was welcome and valuable to remain at the local church they led, and the retired pastor was required or encouraged to leave the local church they led and impact ministry elsewhere. The participants from both sides of the phenomenon were purposefully sought from the population of retired senior pastors and succeeding pastors having experienced either side of the phenomenon.

The research was conducted using participants from across the United States of America. It involved retired senior pastors from evangelical Protestant churches. Results from the study add to the knowledge base for helping retired senior pastors and existing senior pastors prepare for retirement and usefulness following active ministry.

CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

OVERVIEW

The purpose of this research was to explore the lived experience of retired senior pastors with respect to their perceived impact on the ministry of the American evangelical Protestant church. This was accomplished through an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) study, which allowed the participants to tell their ministry story. The research problem, precedent literature, and design methodology were included in the preceding chapters. Chapter Four focuses on research findings in response to the five research questions. The chapter is organized in a manner that informs the reader concerning the protocol, procedures, and measures used in collecting data, participants selected for the research, the participants demographics, and data analysis and findings.

Protocol, Procedure for Data Collection, and Source Demographics

The researcher employed the services of three retired senior pastors to be a part of an expert panel. The purpose of the panel was: to review the protocol; research questions; candidate questions; and to evaluate an interview between the researcher and a senior retired pastor/leader, with the intention of potentially improving the research. The expert panel participated in a video conference on 10 June, 2020 with the researcher. The panel provided comments, recommendations, and insights on elements of research and the interview, which were applied to the study.

The researcher secured the participation of twelve retired senior/lead pastors to support the research study. The process for selecting participants was twofold. First, a candidate survey (included in Appendix A), using Google Forms, was sent to potential candidates identified

through the snowball effect and six denominational leaders. The denominational leaders were requested to send the survey to retired senior pastors in their respective denomination. Forty-three candidates responded to the survey. Of the forty-three respondents to the candidate survey, twenty-one candidates were deemed acceptable for the study. The list was narrowed down to twelve potential participants, ten participants and two alternates. The alternates were intended as replacements in the event participants found it necessary to withdraw from the study.

An interview schedule was prepared for each of the participants, including the alternates. Before commencing with interviews, participant 8 withdrew from the study and was replaced by Alternate 1. All interviews were conducted using Zoom Conferencing software and were video and audio recorded. Interviews began 22 June, 2020 and were completed 2 July, 2020.

Participant 5 was interviewed on 26 June, 2020; however, it was determined following the interview that he failed to qualify for the study since he had not been involved in ministry following retirement. Alternate 2 replaced him and was interviewed on 2 July, 2020. Data was collected through audio-video interviews with each participant.

Interviews ranged from 26 minutes to 55 minutes. The mean interview time was 39.8 minutes. A protocol was used as a loose guide to maintain a sense of direction for the interview. The protocol contained several sub-questions, designed to extract the rich detail and answer the research questions. During the first participant interview, three questions were added to enhance the data gathering process and encourage the participant in telling their 'retirement' story and not merely their ministry experience. The three questions were:

- (1.) What was your greatest impact on ministry in retirement?
- (2.) Why do you continue to serve following retirement?

(3.) What was your impact on or relationship with the succeeding pastors?

Each interview began with an introduction and a brief description of the research being undertaken. The participant was asked to share their story with a brief description of their call into ministry. Throughout the interview the participants were asked clarifying questions to obtain additional data pertinent to the research questions. The interview closed with an expression of appreciation.

Interviews were exported to Otter.ai software for transcription. The software was reported to have a 97 percent accuracy rating. Each transcript was read and corrected to ensure increased the accuracy before initiating content analysis; however, the researcher maintained the participants' literary style. Listening to the recordings allowed the researcher to capture the emotion behind many areas of the participants story. This practice proved to be beneficial when interpreting the stories and coding the transcripts.

Source Demographics

Ten participants and two alternates, all retired pastors, were selected from those responding to a five-question candidate survey. As noted previously, the two alternates replaced two original participants, one who withdrew from the study and one who failed to meet the requirements for the study. The cohort of participants each expressed a deep call to ministry from God at an early age. Participants ages ranged from 67 being the youngest to 87 being the oldest. For statistical purposes, to obtain the mean age of the participants, the youngest and oldest participants' ages were eliminated. The resultant mean age of the participants was 71.4 years. The average years of ministry service for the 10 participants was approximately 43 years. The exact age of the participants and number of years of ministry service were not considered to be

significant to the research. The relevance of these statistics is that they demonstrate that the participants were mature retired pastors, each having four decades of ministry experience. Denominational data and geographic location were not deemed important for the research and was not collected. However, participants were involved in ministry in most regions of the Continental United States and from a wide spectrum of Protestant evangelical denominations. Table 1 illustrates the demographic composition of the cohort of participants.

Table 1

Demographic Information

Participant	Age	Years of Ministry	Retirement Ministry Role	Retirement Geographical
One	72	40+	Bible Teacher Counselor	South
Two	69	40+	Interim Pastor	Midwest & South
Three	69	40+	Associate Pastor	West Coast
Four	75	50+	Interim Pastor	West & Midwest
Five	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
Six	71	48+	Pastoral Care Pastor	West Coast
Seven	87	63+	Pastor of Seniors & No Title	West Coast
Eight	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
Nine	70	45+	Chaplain	Northeast
Ten	73	46+	Interim Pastor	South & Midwest
Alternate One	72	40+	Interim Pastor	Northeast

Alternate Two	67	30+	Camp Operations Director	West Coast
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Participant 1 was 73 years of age and had 40-plus years of ministry experience. He was senior pastor of a church he planted for 27 years, followed by 13 more years as a senior pastor of another church. In retirement he became the unofficial pastor of a retirement community: teaching Bible classes, counseling seniors, and encouraging members of the retirement community. He experienced a fresh encounter with the Holy Spirit that resulted in a new vision and desire to make a difference during his retirement years. He commented that he continues to minister because, “God’s not through with me yet.”

Participant 2 was 69 years of age with 40-plus years of ministry experience. Serving in three difficult, conflicted ministries led him to retired at the age of 61, burned out and finished with church leadership. Upon retirement, he was requested by the DS to serve in a troubled church. He accepted the call to become an interim pastor and is currently serving in his third church post-retirement. He continues to minister because he has been gifted to help hurting, troubled people. He has “felt such an unction when I preached...I couldn’t wait for it to be my turn.”

Participant 3 was 69 years of age and had 40-plus years of ministry experience. He founded and pastored a church for 35 years when he felt God’s leading to take a lesser role in ministry so that he could focus on helping pastors and men in their challenges. He orchestrated a merger with another church and became an associate pastor. He is involved in men’s ministry and supporting the senior pastor. His heritage is a family of pastors with 22 of the existing

members in full time pastoral ministry. His plan for ministry is clear: “till the day I die, I will be doing ministry, not because there’s just a need, but because of my love for it.”

Participant 4 was 75 years of age and had almost 50 years of ministry. His ministry was spent in church planting. Since retiring, he has been involved in helping troubled churches become restored to vibrant ministries. In retirement he served as interim pastor in two churches he planted four decades earlier, which were failing and near closing. He helped them obtain a renewed life in the community they serve. His reason for continuing to serve in interim situations, “I love the church...it’s the bride of Christ...I’ve never lost my love for the bride.”

Participant 6 was 71 years of age and had almost 48 years of ministry experience in two churches. He was a youth and young adult pastor of one church for 12 years and senior pastor of another for 32years. Following retirement, he left the church for a two-year planned absence required by the denominations policy. Upon returning to the church he once led, the succeeding pastor and board of elders requested he become the pastor of pastoral care. His reason for continuing to minister, “I still care. I still have a love for God’s church. I love the people”

Participant 7 was 87 years of age and had more than 63 years of ministry experience. He officially retired at the age of 70 when he realized that he lacked the energy to continue in full-time ministry and demands on a senior pastor. In retirement he became a senior’s pastor on a part time basis. He fully retired when his wife developed dementia, requiring his full attention. He relocated with his family to a different geographic location which provided him with help for his wife and freed him up to serve another church. Following a nearly three-year absence from the pastorate, he was asked to shepherd a young pastor of a church that was struggling. After that assignment, he began assisting an evangelical Lutheran pastor. He continues to serve at 87 years

of age. He shared his conversation with God, “I told the Lord, ‘at this point, I’ve had a better run and ministry than most guys can have. So, anything you want from here on out, it’s fine with me.’ And the pastor and I have become closer and closer.”

Participant 9 was about 70 years of age and had 45 years of ministry experience. He was the senior pastor of his final church for 33 years before retiring. Before retiring he was requested to become a denominational chaplain. He has been ministering to 15 pastors on a regularly and has responsibility for 40 pastors and their pastoral staff. He continues to minister because, “I really loved the chaplaincy I was starting to do.”

Participant 10 was 73 years of age and had 46-plus years of ministry experience. He retired from full-time ministry due to his wife contracting a rare strain of cancer. Following three years of caring for his wife, he was approached to try and resurrect a little church. At the time of the interview, he has been at the small church for six years. His plan for future ministry, “I think I’ll always be busy. If they give me a Sunday class, somewhere in a church, I’ll teach that...I would do the same if it were a dozen people.”

Participant Alternate 1 was 72 years of age and has had more than 40 years of ministry experience in multiple churches and denominational leadership positions. He retired at the age of 66 and immediately was requested to be the interim pastor of a church in need. Six years later, he has had five interim positions. His reason for continuing to serve, “After finishing an interim, I’m tired and say I’m done. I’m not going to do this anymore. But after time goes on, I get itchy and feeling I could probably still have some gifts and abilities that could help. I know I can lead them. That’s why I do it.”

Participant Alternate 2 was 67 years of age and had 30-plus years of ministry experience. His experience is divided between pastoral ministry and Christian camp leadership. He does not plan on retiring. The driving force behind his decision not to retire, “is my relationship with Jesus Christ...my whole life, everything about me, home life, work-life, everything is about Jesus Christ...that’s the way it is, that’s my belief, that’s my heart, that’s my passion.”

The interview data on the participants demographics demonstrated a cohort of men who believed earnestly in the call of God on their lives. Each participant continued to serve in ministry to a greater degree than was expected of members of a congregation.

Data Analysis Procedure

Interview transcriptions were subjected to content analysis using NVivo 12 Content Analysis software. All transcripts were read extensively before coding. The researcher became thoroughly familiar with the elements, structure, emotions, and content of each participants’ story.

Coding was accomplished in two manners. First, the researcher coded each transcript without reference to the research questions, making field notes on the conversations and description given to each code. This step was intended to obtain data from the participants stories without preconceived search criteria. The researcher immersed himself in each transcript, coding extensive amounts of text of the story. The first transcript established many of the initial codes. Subsequent, similar comments from each participant’s transcript were coded using the initial codes. Upon completion of coding each transcript, each code was studied, along with the field notes, to determine if the data from the cohort of participants matched the description of the coded text. The codes were further analyzed and categorized into groups of similar data,

concepts, and thoughts. Each category was vetted against the transcripts for completeness and accuracy. The first step of content analysis resulted in 28 categories, 50 significant codes, and 14 nodes or third-tier codes. Further refining of the step one categories and codes was delayed until step two was accomplished.

The second step in the process was to code the transcripts with respect to the research questions. Each transcript was dissected and interpreted with regards to answering the research questions. Codes were evaluated against other codes, and categories were established. Lines of text and words were reviewed for a relationship with each other and other participants' words and lines of texts. Step two resulted in eight categories and 22 supporting extracts. The data from steps one and two were combined and categorized. This process resulted in five dominant themes, two subthemes, and 14 extracts. The analysis continued until no new textual insights or interpretations emerged to add influence too, or significantly alter, the existing categories and themes. The final analysis resulted in five dominant themes and two subthemes. The researcher determined that content analysis reached code/category saturation from the conglomerate when no emergence of new codes or themes was occurring (Sim & Waterfeild, 2017)

The researcher took the content analysis a step further, requesting a non-bias associate to review the transcript of participant 1 and code it with respect to the research questions, using the established code nomenclature. The confidentiality of the participant was ensured using the pseudonym Participant. The result of the non-bias associate's coding was the same as the researcher's coding. Each of the significant textual elements in the transcript were coded with the same codes applied by the researcher, demonstrating reflexivity. Reflexivity refers to guarding against the influence or bias resulting from the investigator's personal experience when

interpreting the participants lived story (Krefting, 1990). This exercise provided a level of assurance against researcher bias.

Upon completion of coding, the themes (five dominant themes and supporting subthemes) were placed in the order of their significance, focusing on the research questions. The order given to the dominant themes coincided with the order of the research questions and not their numerical code ranking. The five themes captured the essence of the participants' lived experience. Once the initial dominant themes, subtheme, were established, they were evaluated for recurrence by reviewing each of them across the spectrum of participants' respective stories. Krefting (1990) notes that recurrence strengthens the aspect of trustworthiness ensures the integrity and quality of the study. For this study, a dominant theme had to be present in 100 percent of the sample to be classified as recurrent. Subthemes required 30 percent of the sample to be classified as recurrent. The data analysis process produced five dominant themes two subthemes. All five of the dominant themes and subthemes were recurrent.

Findings

The findings are organized along research questions lines. The purpose of each research question is summarized and a discussion of each finding is presented. Themes resulting from the data analysis are included and significant comments from each participant are provided.

Research Question 1

The first research question sought to understand how senior pastors know whether they should remain at or leave the church they led. The question was intended to provide data on a phenomenon which suggests that pastors should leave the local church once they retired, to give

the succeeding pastor a chance to implement and exercise his leadership. Table 2 summarizes the participants' posture in responding to the inquiry.

Eight of the 10 participants left the churches they led when they retired. All eight of them continued to minister in different geographic locations and in various ministry positions. One participant was asked to retire from the senior pastor position of the church he led for 13 years. His words in response to the researcher's inquiry were, "Well, I got pushed out the door...my energy was slipping a bit...and I was beginning to lose it...But you know, it turned out...God has an amazing way of things coming together." Two of the eight participants retired and relocated due to serious illness with their spouse. Following the recovery of and family support in caring for the spouses, both participants continued to minister in churches where they had relocated.

This researcher had a brief follow-up telephone interview with Participant 7, the oldest of the participants. The interview was in regards to his opinion on the decision to remain or leave a ministry upon retirement. His response was, "On a general basis, I do not think you can go back to a church you pastored. There are too many dynamics that could cloud the relationship. People look up to you, and the present pastor might feel threatened." This participant is serving at a ministry, supporting a pastor from a different denomination. Participant 10 had a similar comment, "Most of the time, I try to truly make a proper break and, I prepare the congregation and say, 'This a new man coming you owe him your loyalty.'"

Two of the cohort, participants 3 and 6, remained at the church they led as pastor. Participant 6 was required by his denomination to leave for two years before returning. His comments regarding the two-year hiatus were:

So, I began a search for a lead pastor, someone that would come in. And the understanding was that I would, once the lead pastor was established, I would step away for up to two years, in order to give him every opportunity to have a foothold and be loved and welcomed by the congregation.

Following the two-year absence, the retired pastor returned to the church he led for 32 years, and was asked by the elder board and succeeding pastor to become the Associate Pastor of Pastoral Care. The retired pastor and his spouse responded to their return by noting, “We were called to this ministry...we never felt uncalled.”

Participant 3, remained at the church he led for 35 years. His decision to remain at the church he led came about as he contemplated the future of the ministry. His remarks were,

I came to the place in my life, and as well as the ministry of our church, where there was a greater demand on me to invest in other pastors and so forth. I wasn't really at liberty to do that like I'd like to...I wanted to be able to make sure that the people that God had given me and that I was shepherding would be cared for. And so, I began to pray about that...God opened the door for us to merge.” “I proposed a merging of two congregations and became Associate Pastor, focusing on men's ministry and support of the Senior Pastor.

Summary of Research Question 1

Data collected revealed three distinct responses to whether to remain at the church a pastor led upon retirement or leave that ministry. First, some denominations have policies requiring the senior pastor to leave the church for a period. The data shows this to be for the benefit of the succeeding pastor to become recognized as the leader of the ministry. Two participants' comments demonstrate a belief that this was a good practice.

Second, data revealed that most of the retired pastors participating in the study did not stay at the church they pastored. The research does not reveal their position on whether or not to remain at or leave the church they led when they retired. These participants left the church they

led to continue ministry in other churches or areas. Their decision not to remain was made when they chose to continue serving. Four of them became interim pastors serving in multiple churches in succession following retirement. One of the four was permitted, by the denominations policy, to return to the church he led, following a two-year absence, however, after finishing an assignment as interim pastor, he chose to attend another church. Four of them took other ministry positions such as, Bible teacher, associate pastors, seniors pastors, and chaplains. The participant who became a chaplain chose to leave the church he retired from because he perceived the succeeding pastor's attitude was negative towards the retiring pastor remaining. The pastor who was requested to retire felt it necessary to leave the church he led because it was an uncomfortable situation.

Third, data demonstrated that two retired senior pastors remained at the churches they founded and served more than 30 years. One of them continued to minister at the church without a break in service. The second participant was required to leave the church he led for two years before returning. Both of these retired pastors became or continued to be associate pastors in their respective churches.

In summary, two participants continued to remain in ministry at the church they led when they retired. Two participants expressed opinions against a pastor remaining at the church they led when they retired. Most of the participants chose to relocate to different geographic location when they retired. They continued ministry at locations when they retired.

Table 2

Choice of Church to Attend Following Retirement

Participant	Remained at Church They Led	Left the Church They Led	Rationale for Decision to Leave/Remain	Retirement Ministry
One		✓	Requested to Retire-Relocated	Unofficial Pastor
Two		✓	Retired and relocated where he became an interim pastor.	Currently awaiting an assignment from God
Three	✓		Believed God changed his calling to minister to pastors/men. Proposed a merger of the church he led for 35 years and became Associate Pastor	Associate Pastor
Four		✓	Retired and became interim pastor to four, three churches he pastored	Recently completed 4 th interim pastoral assignment
Five	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
Six	✓		Assisted succeeding pastor and left the church for two years as required by denominational policy. Returned after two-years	Hired as Associate Pastor of Pastoral Care
Seven		✓	Retired and became pastor to seniors in a different denomination	Unofficial Associate Pastor
Eight	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
Nine		✓	Denomination required retired pastor to leave for one year. He became a chaplain in the district	Chaplain

Ten		✓	Spouse developed a rare form of cancer. Relocated for medical reasons	Interim Pastor
Alternate One		✓	Retired as Pastor and accepted interim pastor position	Interim Pastor
Alternate Two		✓	Relocated to camp ministry	Youth camp operations director

Research Question 2

A phenomenon explored in this study was why retired senior pastors continue in ministry following retirement. Research question 2 examined the impact, as perceived by the participants, of retired senior pastors on ministry when they leave the church they led at retirement. This question was half of the equation. The findings of this question were compared with the findings of question 3 to render the sufficiency of the response. A combined result from both questions provided the answer to the overall question of what the perceived impact of retired senior pastors is on ministry.

Data from the analysis of eight participants' transcripts provide the answer to this dominant theme. The responding participants left churches they pastored before retirement. Each participant viewed the work they were doing following retirement as part of their calling from God. The theme was assessed to have six areas of influence. The areas of influence were: (1.) interim pastor, (2.) teacher, (3.) mentor/chaplain, (4.) missionary, (5.) crisis support, and (6.) evangelism. Four participants' perceived impact on ministry was in the area of being an interim pastor at churches looking for and needing a senior pastor. One of the participants became a pastor-teacher, serving a community of senior believers. This participant also began supporting

short-term missions work in Africa. One of the participants became a chaplain for the denomination. One of the participants became a mentor to a senior pastor, and one participant became a director of operations at a Christian camp.

Data reveals that all participants' lived experience contained examples of influence on the ministry following retirement. The statements and comments from data analyzed in each transcript provides the reader examples and understanding of the impact of each member of the cohort on ministry. The participants' comments transport the reader into the lived experience of the retired pastor.

Participant 1 stated, "I have had the best ministry I've ever had." These are the words of a pastor who founded a church and remained as senior pastor of a thriving ministry for 27 years. In retirement, he taught the Bible and connected with people spiritually, both in the retirement community and in the neighboring city. He has the responsibility of a pastor without the title. He has the freedom to lead the fellowship as God directs. A life-long fear of this pastor was being sent by God to Africa. In retirement, he served the residents in a children's center in Mozambique. His comments to this researcher tell of the change God had in him. He spoke, "But there was something about that place that when we landed there, something seemed to say to me 'XXX, you are going to come back here'. And I just had a wonderful time, and I'm still in touch with them. I had planned to go back this year, but then this virus thing sort of shot it down."

Participant 2 spoke of his mental status upon retiring as "a nervous wreck", having served several troubled churches and helped them through crises into a brighter future. He relocated to a different geographic area in the South and was asked to become interim pastor at a troubled Chinese-American church. When he surveyed the church's situation, it was evident that he had

seen the problems in past ministry. His thoughts were, “somehow nothing that happened there scared me because I just saw it all before.” The impact participant 2 believed God used him for is found in his words, “But God used me, I think, just to give them some peace. While I was there, a member of the church that I was working with had a heart attack and died in his 40s. The whole church was just stunned and yet nobody knew how to care for people in grief and pain. Well, I’ve always felt like my best sermons have been funerals. And it’s been very comfortable for me to walk with people that are either dying or family members of people that have passed away. And God just brought me there for that time.” After being requested to help another troubled church, his comments were, “I guess what God was preparing us for was to minister to churches in pain...I feel like that’s been the main theme of my life.”

Participant 4 began serving as interim pastor as he was transitioning into retirement. The district superintendent (DS) requested that he step in and help a church that had decreased attendance from 300 congregants to 35. Participant 4 started this church 40 years earlier. The DS believed the church would be closed, and the decision would be based on the assessment of participant 4. After assessing the demographics of the church ministry area, and the church’s situation, the pastor helped the church restructure their ministry to enable them to reach the community. He found attitudes that were formed from the ministry of an interim pastor. The participant’s reflection on the approach was, “They’d had a youth pastor who became the interim pastor, and who had told them that God really hadn’t done anything in their lives for 20 years and probably never was going to do anything in their lives.”

Participant 4’s assessment of the church was that “...the congregation was a group of people who really loved the Lord and loved ministry and had a desire to minister, but just didn’t

know how to do it.” The impact of his ministry is found in his description of the actions taken. He said, “We just kind of blew up the constitution and wrote a new one that was functional for that congregation...we got up to this point with families with about eight to ten children, and then called the young pastor who came in and has done a marvelous job there. They now have a couple of hundred people, and I think 40-50 kids and God’s doing some really good things.” The final comment participant 4 on his impact with that church was, “I think they just needed to be told that they were loved and that someone cared about them, and that God was not done with them.”

Participant 4 served as interim pastor at a total of four churches, each with similar results. Two of the churches he served as interim pastor were started by him decades earlier and one of them was the church where he came to accept Christ in as a youth. Participant 4 shared a comment by his DS. The DS reflected on his impact saying, “I think you’ve probably had more impact in ministry in retirement than in your whole life.” The depth of participant 4’s impact is further indicated by his own words, “Each church we came in, we said, ‘God, what do you have for a pastor for this church? Who is going to think of these broken churches, I can take them,’ and this one we were especially concerned with. We were there two years, and how are you going to find a pastor that fits that demographic, who is willing to tackle that situation?” The participant called a large church and inquired about pastors who were ready to lead a church. He then mentored the incoming pastor.

Participant 7 believed that his gifting was in the area of helping broken churches heal. He remarked, “I realized I’d had a healing ministry over the years. Not in terms of physical healing, I don’t have the gift of healing or any of that, but going to churches that have been troubled,

some split, some so unsure of themselves, helping them to get established and move on in a new direction.” He also influenced churches to demonstrate care for their communities. He told of his favorite story about the results of his ministry. He said, “My favorite story is of one kid that, I mean, he was from such a bad home. I mean, the pastor told me he’d been going there since he was a junior, but off and on. But he would be so uncontrollable, and the elders sometimes had to wrestle him to the ground. But he kept coming back and so then he ended up finding the Lord. By the way, I asked the youth pastor, ‘why does he keep coming back?’ and he says, ‘well, he can’t find anyplace else that loves him as much.’”

In the participant’s last ministry, he was volunteering to support the senior pastor in several areas of ministry, not as a member of the church, but as one who was concerned with the ministry. His comments about his involvement are, “So I now have some rather significant ministries in the church. I am deeply far more respected than I think I have any right to be because I know my failures.” He assumed a position to help the congregation express their love for Christ, and how He has changed their life. It involved publishing a periodic testimony. His response to this position, “God has given me enough talent in that area. They (the congregation) are handling it well, and we are getting them to open up in ways they never have. The pastor is absolutely thrilled.”

Participant 9 assumed a denomination position as chaplain, having as many as 40 pastors and their pastoral staff to care for. The district established the position several years before participant 9 retired, to provide someone for the pastors to confide in and be able to talk freely. He comments on the impact of the ministry he felt called to, “And we have seen a great decline in moral failures. And we feel like it has at least some relationship to having the chaplaincy and

chaplains. And so that's been a real blessing to build greater and closer relationships with all the other pastors and come alongside some that were hurting some that were thinking about quitting and, and just needed someone to come in or recommendations to get some counseling and those types of things...as part of my ministry as a chaplain, I have a coaching cluster of pastors that involves about 15 different pastors... But the greatest satisfaction and joy to me has been meeting with the pastors coming alongside them, letting them unburden to me and talk about their frustrations and, and from ministry experience to be able to coach them and encourage them and come alongside, and that's been the most fulfilling to me.”

Upon retiring, participant 10 served as interim pastor of one church for the past six years. He shares that his hallmark of ministry is “dealing with crises, healing ministries, administering church discipline, cleaning out just unbiblical things, membership that was very sinful...with gentleness” He focuses on the spiritual foundation of the members of the congregation so that they can to go evangelize and help other people. He states, “I'm trying to make sure that the foundation of the people who are here (is solid) and go after people, but in reality, I'm the only one that's doing evangelism on a one to one basis of helping reach people...But I've come with the sense that okay, I need to help, reset, re-establish the foundations and get their household in order so that when people come, they're attracted.” He comments that “my greatest impact was to begin to teach and preach solid, biblical truth. There were great holes in their understanding of their theological studies.” Participant 10 stated that, “The other (impact) is to establish what it means to be a disciple-maker. And that’s still not where it ought to be. That’s a big concern for me. There’s not a warm-heartedness of outreach. We have to improve our friendliness.”

Participant A1 has served as interim pastor four or five times since retiring six years ago. In each of the churches, he brought an attitude of encouragement and bringing people together. This was demonstrated by the words he shared from one congregant in a church he was the interim pastor with, "I hope (my impact was) positive and in some churches that I've served as interim, I've received that kind of word. In fact, I'm a little embarrassed in the one church, and they feel I've made all the difference, that they were going down the tubes and because of me, and I honestly don't feel that way at all. I get very uncomfortable when they tell me that. I really feel it was just the Lord God chose to turn the church around at that time. It had nothing to do with me...I work to bring people together and that kind of thing, but I did that everywhere."

Participant A2 impacted ministry in a manner different from all nine other participants. Following fourteen years as pastor of a church, at the age when many retire, he was called to Christian camp ministry. His impact on the ministry was in his leadership. He explains his impact, "God has given me the capacity to lead. And I've been able to do that. I've had people that I've worked with that have been the most-timid individuals, but I have been able to lead them into a position where they've been strong, and able to participate in discipleship."

Summary of Research Question 2

Data gathered and analyzed served as the basis for this theme. The areas of influence revealed by the data were: interim pastor, teacher, mentor/chaplain, missionary, crisis support, and evangelism. The most significant excerpt from each participants' transcribed interview has been shared in this section. The data presented was a segment of the rich detail of the lived experience of the participants. It captured the essence of each story to portray, in detail, the perceived impact of each participant who found it necessary to leave their church the led

following retirement. This section provided a picture of the different kinds of impact each participant appeared to have on the various ministries. The analysis of the transcripts revealed continuing involvement in ministry by the cohort.

Research Question 3

This section is a counterpart to question two. It examines the perceived impact retired senior pastors had on ministry when the retiree remained at the church they led. This is dominant theme three. The theme represents the data from two participants. They were the only two of the ten participants to remain at the ministry they led before retirement. Both participants became associate pastors at the church they led as senior pastors.

The perceived impact of Participant 3 is unique in that he remained at the church he founded 35 years earlier, without a break in service. He proposed a merger with another church and chose to become the associate pastor, yielding the lead pastor position to the younger pastor. Comments from the succeeding pastor, as told by participant 3, provide rich data on the influence of the retiring or receding leader, “you have brought some stability to our church. People look up to you, they see you as someone that is a solid man, serving God, and you have brought some solidity.”

The most significant impact participant 3 described was having an impact on men’s lives. He stated, “God has put me in a position to be a spiritual father to young men...” Examples of this impact are present throughout the data. The participant’s beliefs on the impact of his ministry are seen in the following statement from him, “I’m beginning to build relationships that are becoming stronger, you know, and that gives us an opportunity to be an example than to

share and to help build these men to become strong because strong men in the church are going to make a strong church.”

Participant 6 returned to the church he led for thirty-two years. The denomination this participant was part of required the retiring senior pastor to leave the church they led for two years before returning. After a two-year hiatus from the church, participant 6 returned to the church to become part of the congregation. The elder board and the succeeding pastor, whom the participant mentored as an associate pastor, requested participant 6 to become Associate Pastor of Pastoral Care.

Since returning to the ministry, participant 6 has been involved in pastoral care, including shepherding the leadership and giving attention to the sheep. He comments, “One of the key ways I did that was I did an encouragement card ministry. Every week I would probably send out 40-50 encouragement cards to perhaps people I had talked to on Sunday and we’ve had a brief conversation, or people that were missing, people that hadn’t been seen for a while. And it seemed like that type of pastoral care really had an impact, largely because of God.”

This participant’s comments provide rich data regarding the impact his ministry to the church. He commented, “I had no way of knowing that what I was writing on a Sunday afternoon or a Monday morning, I didn't know what time that postcard would arrive at that person's house. But on a weekly basis, I would hear from people, ‘You don't know what kind of day I was having when that postcard came’ or ‘I can't believe you remembered what I asked you for about prayer for two weeks ago.’ God would bring to mind or that God would decide sovereignly when that card would be ready received it could be two days later, it could be two

weeks later. But that card which was read in the hearts of people as loving care by their pastor...they remembered how much I cared.”

Summary of Research Question 3

This section provided rich data relating to the perceived impact of retired senior pastors on the ministry of the church they led and remained in, following retirement. The data was based on the interviews of two participants. They were the only participants remaining at the church they led after they retired. Both participants became associate pastors. Participant 3 assumed the associate pastor position and remained at the church without a period of separation. Participant 6 was required, by denominational policy, to leave the church for two years before returning.

The data presented demonstrated the ministry opportunities each returning pastor participated in. Participant 3 served to assist his replacement and focused on men’s ministry. Participant 6 concentrated on pastoral care, particularly a ministry of encouragement. The data, combined with data from research question 2, provided a picture of the perceived impact of retired pastors following retirement.

Research Question 4

The fourth research question sought to understand the role of retired senior pastors in the local church ministry’s success. This question distinguishes the participants’ ministry versus merely being a member of the congregation. An extensive evaluation of each participant’s interview transcripts provided rich data that was sufficient to answer the research question.

Participant 1 assumed the role of unofficial pastor of a retirement community that had struggled with continuing church services. He had been requested to retire from the church he led for eleven years. However, the time away from the church allowed him an opportunity to

evaluate his position and future with God. He reflected, “But then in a wonderful way, God opened up some other doors. And actually, I’m probably more excited about ministry now than I ever have been.” Something changed in his relationship with life and his impact on ministry may be seen in his comments, “I am totally convinced from various readings and all the rest of it that we should be living on a level on par with the book of Acts.” Following this encounter with God, he experienced God’s leading.

He explains his next ministry opportunity. “My wife and I were visiting this elderly lady in this retirement community, and we were just having lunch together. And she mentioned, she just happened to casually mention, ‘pastor Ken you know we’re supposed to have church on Sunday, and the speaker just canceled on us, so we’re not going to have church.’ So, I said, ‘well, do you want a speaker.’ And that just opened the door to that place. I have had the best ministry I’ve ever had, connecting with people in this fairly upscale retirement home.” The role he played in the success of the ministry was to be the unofficial pastor, ministering to seniors each Sunday morning and throughout the week.

Participant 2 took the role of interim pastor of extremely troubled churches. He comments on the situation of one church he was called to, “The church in xxxxx, xxxxx has some serious problems. And bunches of other people just left the church because it is so conflicted...it was so bad, and yet somehow nothing there scared me.” He shared his calling to a second church where he had been asked to become interim pastor, “Then another church was having serious problems because the pastor committed adultery, they had a mortgage of over a million dollars...” The church was in no condition to pay a pastor. Most of its resources went to the mortgage. The participant’s words demonstrate his commitment after considering the

situation, “And I said, ‘I need to go home, and talk to my wife.’ And so, I went home and we discussed it. And that next Sunday, when I came back, I was preaching, and I met with the board and said, ‘I’ll tell you what, I’ll just help you for free.’ And so, I spent the next almost two years with them, helping just being a presence within just stabilizing the leadership team just being a church.”

Participant 3 believed God told him to give up his role as senior pastor and become an associate pastor. This change was to use his experience supporting the new pastor and investing in men. He has no plans to retire but to continue ministry in a support role. His comments about his role, “I came to a place in my life...as well as the ministry of our church, where there was a greater demand on me to invest in other pastors. I wasn't really at liberty to do that like I'd like to. I'm currently a chairman of a group called Band of Brothers, which is the ministerial fellowship of independent pastors that just reach out to someone that doesn't have a covering, someone that doesn't have any real association, we're just there to provide counsel, support, and prayer.”

Participant 4 was a church planter and senior pastor. He planted two churches and, upon retirement, he became interim pastor in a number of troubled churches. One of the troubled churches he became interim pastor in he planted 40 years earlier. Another troubled church he served as interim pastor was his home church, where he had been baptized. The last church he led in retirement was a church he planted several decades earlier. His conversation with the regional minister shows difficult the situation he faced. He recalled the RM's words, “He [the RM] said, ‘you realize you may have to close it.’ And I said, ‘Well, that would be a challenge to close the church you had started.’”

The role of interim pastor of his home church, the last one he served in retirement, was the same as the first church he served as interim. He explained, “The pastor who was appointed to fill the lead pastor's role at the church, talked with the RM and he said, ‘we have enough money for about six months. I'd like you to work out a severance package for me, and then we close the church.’ The RM said, ‘Well, you know, Larry’s just about done [with another church], so, why don’t we let him just come in and evaluate and see if that's the case.’ Now to make this one even more interesting, this was my home church, the church I was baptized in. So, I was going home with the potential of closing my home church. We got there and again, found a cadre of people who love the Lord, but needed to learn to love their community.” The data demonstrated, in detail, the role of this participant as interim pastor to troubled churches.

Participant 6 served in two churches: his home church, where he served 12 years in various roles from youth ministry through the young married, and as a senior pastor of a single church for 32 years. Following retirement, and a two-year hiatus from the church he led, he accepted the associate pastor’s role in charge of pastoral care. He discussed his role as associate pastor at the church he led, “What better part time job for a guy that's pastored for 48 years, then being able to go back to a church, and the church he spent the second half of his of his life in. So, we are truly blessed to be back in that ministry.”

Participant 7 was involved in a liturgical ministry far different than his community church background. He has no title role. He was heavily involved in ministry and assisting the senior pastor. He commented on his role in retirement, at the age of 87 years, “You know, I don't need to be a titled person to have a ministry. The ability to be an encouragement to other Christians? That has really come out. I think I encouraged the pastor, helped him to see it from

different angles... So, there have been certain people in our church that have had crises that God has just laid on my heart. So, I start praying especially for them, and there's about four that I regularly send encouragement notes to every week, and then there'll be other times others will show up and I, you know, sporadically, send them out, and those get a tremendous response. Tremendous response. But again, that happens to be my leading...But in the area of encouraging, strengthening people, that's been my ministry. And it still is.”

Participant 9 retired after pastoring a church for 33 years. His retirement role has been as a chaplain to as many as 40 senior pastors and their pastoral staff. The task is an official denomination position and title. It was established to stem the incidents of moral failure among pastors. The data from his interview transcript reveals his feelings on his position as chaplain, “And so that's been a real blessing to build greater and closer relationships with all the other pastors and come alongside some that were hurting some that were thinking about quitting and, and just needed someone to come in, or recommendations to get some counseling and those types of things.”

Participant 10 has had the role of interim pastor at a single church since his retirement. He has served this church for six years. The data from the transcript of his interview provides a rich, in-depth picture of his role. He laid strong biblical teaching and understanding of God’s disciplines and expectations of His church. He led the church in the completion of a significant building program. He repaired sinks and taught men how to lead. He mentored men to draw more men into the ministry. Participant 10 spoke of the most important contributions he made as interim pastor of his last church, “What I consider right now [as important] is my past understanding about building projects and knowing what it takes to do financially, inspiring

people to start giving consistently and to give exegetical, clear biblical knowledge about the Word of God.” The gifts of the retired pastor helped the congregation become responsible and take ownership of the church’s ministry.

Participant A1 has had the role of an interim pastor in five churches since retirement. Most of the interim pastor assignments have been short term. The transcript of his interview provided data on his position as interim pastor. His comments were, “But I’ve learned something through this that may be unique to my experience. If it’s going to be a successful interim, the District Superintendent must talk with the leadership of the church as well as the man and give clear expectations about what he wants the interim to do. Otherwise, if that doesn’t happen, the man is merely a chaplain. And that’s what I’m experiencing in this third church that I’m working with right now...And it’s frankly frustrating for me.”

Participant A2 assumed the role of the director of operations for a Christian camp. Data from his interview transcript reveals that while his role does not involve spiritual impact such as what an interim pastor might encounter, he has a passion for the ministry he is involved in. His comments on his role in ministry, “And so I love what I’m doing. And I can’t think past what I’m doing right now. I mean, I don’t have a driving passion to be the executive director of another camp or of this camp. I have the driving passion to do what needs to be done in my ministry areas. If God called me to be that someplace, somewhere, or if He wanted me to be a pastor again. It still holds, the decision I made in March of 2019. Whatever God wants me to do, I’ll do it.”

Summary of Research Question 4

This section provided rich, detailed data on the role retired senior pastors had in their retirement ministry. The majority of participants assumed new roles in the post-employment, post-career phase of their ministry. Data reveals that: four participants served as interim pastors, two served as associate pastors, one served as chaplain to 40 senior pastors and their pastoral staffs, two had no titles, however, one of them served as an associate pastor of a large senior retirement community and the other served as associate pastor, and one participant served as operations director of a Christian camp. The data showed that all participants continued to serve in ministry following retirement. Data also showed that over fourteen ministries were influenced by the ministry of the ten participants involved in this study.

Research Question 5

The data analyzed to encompass theme five responded to question five. This section sought to determine the perceived impact of retired senior pastors on succeeding senior pastor's ministry. Data from each participant form the basis of this theme, however, eight of the ten participants did not remain at the church they led following retirement. The question was expanded to determine the impact on the succeeding pastor and the relationship between the two pastors.

Participant 1 had no communication with, or impact on, the pastor who assumed leadership of the church the retired pastor had led. Participant 1 commented, "I have no problems at all talking to him, for some reason he doesn't seem very interested in connecting...he hasn't shown any interest in getting together at all. So, I just let it be." This participant's experience was that of most of the participants.

Data from the transcript of Participant 2 showed that he did not have a relationship with the succeeding pastors of any of the churches he led. The data collected presented a picture of the churches he ministered in being conflicted, troubled, and left him in a burnout situation. He commented, “But I finally stepped down because I felt like I’d just become a nervous wreck.”

Participant 3 remained at the church he led when he reached retirement age. He recommended a merger of the church with a church that was led by a younger senior pastor. His relationship with the new pastor has been powerful. His impact on the succeeding senior pastor is seen in the analysis of the data from his transcript. Participant 3 comments, “We have a very, very good relationship. You know, we have different styles of leadership. I mean, there are some things that he does I would do differently, but they're not anything having to do with Scripture or theology or belief or anything like that. It has to do with a difference in the way that we would lead, which is fine. I have no problem with that. We talk on a regular basis. We talk almost every day. And I have become, for the most part, a sounding board for him. When he needs to unload, when he needs to rant, when he needs to just get it off his chest, he calls me. And I just listened.” Data shows the participant’s attitude toward their relationship. Participant 3 comments, “And, I've made it a point, with God's help, to pray for him every single day since we merged, because I figure if we're going to have a relationship, and it's going to be a blessing [I need to pray for him]...He knows I understand where he’s coming from.”

Data provides a picture of Participant 4's relationships with the former pastors of 3 of the churches where he served. He says of the first pastor, “I still have a bit of communication with him, but very minimal. It is very contentious.” This pastor was replaced as an interim pastor by participant 4. The data from this participant also includes his relationship with another pastor

who replaced him. The participant comments, “So, I’ve known him throughout the years. We’ve had minimal conversation, but still a good, really good relationship.” No data was available on the impact on these pastors from the participant. Data shows that in the third church that Participant 4 served as interim pastor, he searched for his replacement. He chose to return to this church following his final retirement. Of the succeeding pastor, Participant 4 states, “He’s a great preacher, excellent preacher, son of a pastor, and loves the congregation...he has done a marvelous job, and the people have just been thrilled.”

Participant 6 led a nation-wide search for his replacement. When the church selected the new pastor, participant 6 spent six weeks helping him understand the ministry and how the retiring pastor operated, his teaching style, and his interaction with the leadership. Participant 6 comments about his replacement pastor, “He had a chance to observe how I did things and was certainly free to do his own thing. But to his credit, he took a number of things that I’d been doing, like PowerPoint, outlines and the messages. And so, he has slid into the role.” After a two-year absence from the church, the retired pastor returned and became an associate pastor.

Participant 7 relocated to a different geographic location and had no interaction with his replacement pastor. His relationship with the succeeding pastor is found in the data provided in a follow-up conversation with the participant. He spoke, “I do not think you can go back to a church you pastored. There are too many dynamics that cloud your relationship...the present pastor might feel threatened.” Participant 7 served to ‘shepherd,’ the pastor of an Asian-mixed congregation. His comments about influencing the pastor are, “Then most of my rest of that period was spent assisting the pastor. I preached rather regularly. I did a lot of counseling and just letting the pastor bounce ideas off of me and giving him my two bits. It was a joy during that

period to give him my opinion, stand up and pray for him, and say, 'Now the buck stops with you. I'm going home'."

Participant 9 mentored and groomed his replacement. The data presents his story on the relationship with the succeeding pastor. His comments, "So, in essence, I was still preaching, I was giving more of the preaching ministry to him...and I ask that they [the church] elect him as the chairman of the governing board to give him some experience and leadership." The participant continues commenting on the relationship, "Well, that has been a little bit disappointing in a way. I felt that I had the impression that even though I basically gave him my whole library and gave him my office equipment, mentored him for three years and, worked with him toward ordination, all kinds of stuff. I really had the impression he felt very threatened with me still living in town. I'm still living in the same town as the church. And I've never asked him why he feels that way. And so, while we are congenial, he gives me a hug when he sees me and all of that, it's very, very obvious to me that he doesn't really want me around and feels threatened by my presence."

The data from Participant 10 regarding theme five shows that he did not influence or impact the pastor who succeeded him at the church when he retired. His comments on the relationship with his replacement reveal his beliefs, "Most of the time I try to truly make a proper break and I prepare the congregation [and] say, 'this new man coming, you owe him your loyalty.'" Participant 10 did not make an effort to remain in contact with the succeeding pastor.

Participant A1 had five interim positions. He returned to the church they attended, not as pastor but as district superintendent, in 1999. While attending that church, he continued to serve as interim pastor at three churches, helping them work through issues. Data on his relationship

with the pastor of the church demonstrates the relationship he has with the pastor. His comments are, “Very well. And my experience has been that if retired pastors and missionaries are not valued, or given a sense of value, they will cause trouble in the church.”

Participant A2 data reveals that he did not impact the pastor who replaced him at the only church he led. He did not attempt to make contact with the succeeding pastor. He left the pastorate to pursue ministry at a Christian camp.

Summary of Research Question 5

Data analyzed in support of answers for RQ5 demonstrate that six of the participants did not have influence, impact, or relationship with the succeeding pastor of the church they led. Data also shows that three of the retiring pastors had an impact on the succeeding pastor. However, one of them has a lackluster relationship with the pastor. Six of the participants had communication with the succeeding pastors.

Subtheme Relationship to the Five Dominant Themes.

This section discusses the relationship between the subtheme, which surfaced as a result of the extensive content analysis. The subtheme surfaced in both steps of analysis described above. The subtheme surfaced when the content analysis was accomplished without the pre-envisioned research questions. The subtheme further surfaced through the content analysis performed using the research questions as the basis of the analysis. The data from both steps were further evaluated and categorized the subtheme remained. The subtheme was categorized as; Why Do I Continue to Serve. The subtheme was categorized as: Why do I Continue to Serve. The subtheme was brought to the surface by an added interview inquiry about the retiree's motivation to stay in ministry following retirement.

Relationship of the Subtheme (Why Do I Continue to Serve) to the Research

A final interview question was asked in the interview. The participant was asked what keeps them in the ministry when so many people retire at earlier ages? The question relates to the research from the standpoint that the accepted official retirement age in the United States, as of 2019, is 65 years of age (Anspach, 2019). The youngest participant in the research was 67. Seven participants were over 70 years of age. Data from the study confirms that the participant, retired senior pastors, continue being active in ministry beyond the national retirement age.

The combined cohort responded to the inquiry with three specific reasons: (1.) there's an excitement about ministry, (2.) there's a need for ministry, (3.) God is still working through me.

Participant 1 explained, "Actually, I'm probably more excited about ministry now than I have ever been." He comments the number one reason is excited about ministry, "I'm not about to go golfing until Jesus comes. I want to do something significant. There are this natural fire and energy." He further states that God impressed on his heart that he was not finished yet. The participant's comments were, "I feel God speaking to me and saying, 'No-no, it's not over yet.' Yeah, I mean very distinctly, giving me a message. Yeah, 'Don't be talking in the past tense, like you're all done. You're not all done. I got all kinds of things for you to do.'" Data from his transcript showed that the participant believed there is a tremendous need. He noted, "And so, I see a tremendous need around and so, I want to do what I can to let the light shine..."

Participant 2, serving as an interim pastor in two churches, noted, "There's a church...that has some serious problems, and God just brought me there for that time." Data from his transcript reveals that God gave him love and excitement and joy in ministry. He spoke, "I felt such an unction when I preached...and to tell people and everybody in my churches."

Data showed the participant's attitude when he talks about ministry, "I really enjoy just communicating a coherent picture of God and His grace..." Five sentences near each other in his transcript reveal his sentiment, "I also love encouraging...I enjoyed working with people in grief...I love to minister in that context and tell people's story...I enjoyed working in ministerial groups...I want to be your pastor."

Participant 3 stepped down from leading the church he founded 35 years earlier, to become an associate pastor. His response to the question of continuing in ministry was the most extensive of all the participants. His first response was, "I came to a place in life, and as well as ministry, where there was a greater demand on me to invest in other pastors...But this is something I can't get out of. I live and breathe ministry. You know, my heart goes out to God's people, and I want to do everything that I can to encourage..." He commented about the value of ministry when he said, "It's like there's no greater reward...to know that somehow you've had some small influence in helping someone get through..."

Data from the transcript of participant 4 displays his reasons for continuing to minister following retirement. His first reason is because of his gifting. His words, "My wife will often say that God gave me a gift mix developed over the years, and she said, all of those gifts seem to just come together in these last...interims. I mean, you just have all of the gifts to be able to lead a church through if it's a constitutional change if it's dealing with whatever the issue may be. A second reason is recorded in his statement, "And so, it's been really kind of fun. I love the church. You know it's The Bride of Christ. And when I fell in love with the church in college, as a math major and changed my direction, I never lost my love for The Bride. And so, it's just fun to see the church of Christ grow and be impacted."

The data from the transcript of participant 7, the oldest participant at 87 years of age, presented three reasons for continuing in ministry. The first reason offered by the data was because God has provided a way for him to minister and care for his ailing wife at the same time. He expresses, "So, I find how God has provided because I can adapt my time to my wife's needs, and it also focuses me away from her needs, which can be a real problem. And how God provides, you know, I just, I'm learning how ungrateful I have been over the years for God's faithfulness." A second reason is found in the data: there is a need. The data displays his comments. He says, "So, the pastor has a great need." And "You know, seniors are lonely. And we were able to help focus that loneliness into some positive way in ministries." And the third reason contained in the transcript data is how God has prepared him for ministry. The participant comments, "God has given me enough talent in that area."

Participant 9 led a church for 33 years before becoming a chaplain to 40 senior pastors. Data from his transcript demonstrate his reasons for remaining in ministry. Participant 9 relates, "And so that's been a real blessing to build greater and closer relationships with all the other pastors and come alongside some that were hurting some that were thinking about quitting and, and just needed someone to come in or recommendations to get some counseling and those types of things." Another reason to remain in ministry is found in his statement, "And I find that very, very fulfilling, and I am still doing that chaplaincy."

Participant 10 serves as an interim pastor while caring for a wife having dementia. His comment, "I like to see God work. You know, the big thing I want to see God work is with, working in the life of the church, and I want to see him do a miracle with this small church. That's my passion, to get up and running." He continues, "But I've come with a sense that, Okay,

I need to help re-establish the foundation and get their household in order, so that when people come, they are attracted.” Data appears to present the participant’s involvement, as may be observed in his words, “If I can mentor a guy, then I’m fulfilled, and I would love to see how God uses me...”

Participant A1 was serving in his fourth interim pastor assignment. He presents a view on continuing to serve. His view is quite different from the data gleaned from the other nine participants. His story includes this personal reflection. He spoke, “Well, it's interesting, when I finish one (interim pastor assignment), I'm tired, and I say I'm done. I'm not going to do anymore. But after time goes on, I get itchy and feeling like I could probably still have some gifts and abilities that could help. And then I'm invited to do it, and then I pray about it and dialogue about it and I end up doing it. And then 10 months later I say that's it, I'm not doing anymore. So, I do it really because I feel I still have health, I still have ability. I get a feeling like I know, I think I can help them. I think I can lead them. And that's why I do it.”

Participant A2 data on continuing to serve is limited. His comments, “Well, the driving force is my relationship to Jesus Christ...my passion is ministry. I've always thought that I'd probably be in front of a bunch of people sharing Christ or telling them what to do or how to do things in whatever ministry capacity, and I just fall down, and then go to meet the Lord. You know, that's just what I always thought, you know, it's going to be that way.”

Summary of Why I Continue to Serve

This section presented data on why retired senior pastors continue to minister following retirement. The data demonstrated the lived experience of all participants in this study. It

provided the reader with the participants' view on why they serve in retirement. Each participants' comments help to understand the ministry of retired pastors concerning retirement.

Evaluation of Research Design

Research Design Strengths

The interpretative phenomenological analysis design and protocol afforded the researcher a clear roadmap to gather and analyze the participants' lived experiences. The protocol helped the researcher in collecting sufficient data to answer the research questions. The protocol also helped provide data that supports the reasons behind the five research questions. The method of selecting participants, part of the protocol, made it possible to obtain participants from a wide variety of denominations and geographical locations. The phenomenological design made it possible for each participant to have a platform to tell their story. The semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to ask additional questions that provided data not anticipated from the initial interview questions. The open-ended style of questioning resulted in most interview questions being answered without prompting. The longer interview experienced with 30 percent of the participants provides the opportunity for the researcher to become enmeshed with the participant in their story.

Research Weaknesses

While the semi-structured, open-ended questioning method allows the participant freedom to tell their story, it provided a forum that allowed thirty percent of the participants to speak longer than anticipated. This required more extensive content analysis. The value of the added content analysis was not evaluated. The phenomenological method requires a considerable amount of transcription data to be obtained. The added interview lengths required a great

measure of content analysis, which the researcher is obligated to perform, without the promise of in-depth, rich, personal data in return. The research would have been enhanced by using a survey to gather data from a greater number of participants

Chapter Four Summary

Chapter 4 presented the data sources and the procedure used to collect and analyze the data for the research. It showed the important or relevant data and accompanying analysis for each of the five research questions. Additionally, it provided analysis and relational data for a subtheme that surfaced through the thorough data analysis of why retired pastors continue to serve following retirement. Data for each of the research questions provided a summary of each participants' lived experience.

Data for RQ 1 sought to understand the signs that, inwardly, tell a pastor whether to remain at, or leave the church they led when retiring. Data for RQs 2 and 3 sought to understand the perceived impact each participant believed they had on ministry following retirement. Data for RQ 4 evaluated the role retired pastors played in post-retirement ministry. Data for RQ 5 explored the impact and relationship of the retired senior minister on, and with, the replacement pastor of the church they led. The collective data gathered and analyzed for this research revealed each participant's lived experience in serving the Kingdom purposes following retirement age. The chapter concludes with a brief evaluation of the research method.

CHAPTER FIVE

Overview

The purpose of Chapter 5 is to present conclusions resulting from the research data and analysis. The chapter provides the reader with reviews of the implications, applications, and limitations of the research findings. The chapter concludes with suggestions for further research opportunities relating to the impact and value of retired senior pastors to kingdom ministry.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) study is to explore the lived experience of retired senior pastors with respect to their perceived impact on the ministry of the American evangelical Protestant church

Research Questions

The following research questions were used to guide this study:

- RQ1.** What, if any, are the signs that tell a retired senior pastor whether they should remain at or should leave the church they led when they?
- RQ2.** What, if any, is the perceived impact to the ministry if the retired senior pastor leaves the local church they led?
- RQ3.** What, if any, is the perceived impact to ministry if the retired senior pastor remains at the local church they led?
- RQ4.** What, if any, role can the retired senior pastor play in the success of the local church ministry?
- RQ5.** What, if any, is the impact of the retired senior pastor on the succeeding pastor?

Research Conclusions, Implications, and Applications

Research Conclusions

The research findings were inconclusive with respect to offering specific answers to all of the research questions. The research design sought to explore the phenomenon as viewed through the lived experiences of the participating retired senior pastors; not necessarily to provide definitive conclusions. Taking into consideration the purpose of the research design, the study offered a general understanding of the overall impact to ministry by retired senior pastors. The following section will provide a more specific picture of the conclusions in light of each research question.

Research Question 1 Conclusion

The first research question sought to understand how retired senior pastors know whether they should remain at, or leave, the church they led. The research was inconclusive in providing a definitive answer to the question since 60 percent of the participants (six participants) relocated to different geographic locations for personal, family, or ministry reasons. Four of these participants served as interim pastors in the area they relocated.

Forty percent of the participants (four participants) offered opinions on the topic and they were split on whether to remain at or leave the church they led. The different views of the participants aligned with the trend seen in the literature. Bird (2014) commented that the outgoing pastor should help create a transition plan and then get out (p. 54). Other authors supported idea that the retiring pastor should leave the church they led (Harmon, 1987, p. 72; Albright, 2005, p. 19; Mahlberg, 2017). Literature aligned with those participants who supported the position that a retired pastor should remain at the church they led. Albers (2012) believes that

retired senior pastors may be helpful to the local church by remaining (p. 20). Other sources support the thought that the retiring pastor can remain at the church they led, providing the succeeding and retiring pastor are in agreement and develop a transition plan (Irwin, 2017).

Two of the participants who believed they should leave the church they led felt that the succeeding senior pastor deserved the right to exercise authority and leadership without the former pastor staying around. Two other participants who supported remaining at the church they led believed they could benefit the pastor who replaced them. One of these participants remained at the church he led and assumed the position of associate pastor. The second participant's denominations required the pastor to leave the church for two years before returning. The denominations policy could be regarded as supporting the retired pastor's leaving the church when they retired. However, in this situation, the former pastor, succeeding senior pastor, and the congregation knew of and approved the former pastor's plans to return to the church. The absence of the former pastor was intended to allow the succeeding pastor to establish his leadership in the church and allow the congregation time to accept the new pastor.

In essence, three of the four participants that offered an opinion on remaining at, or leaving the church they led, supported allowing the succeeding pastor time to establish himself as the ministry leader. However, statistically, considering all 10 participants involved in the research, there is insufficient data to form a definitive conclusion on whether a retired senior pastor should remain at, or leave the church they led when they retire.

The oldest participant in the cohort, an 87-year-old retired pastor who served over 63 years, offered a valuable piece of wisdom. The sage insight of this participant was, "Your effectiveness as a retired pastor is equal to your ability to realize you are retired, and you are in a

support role now.” This profound statement is perhaps the most significant answer to whether a retired pastor should remain at or leave the church they led when they retire. The research data showed that eight of the participants plan on retiring at some time. When they choose a home church, whether it is the final church they led or a different one, this sage advice could be a determining factor in the success of their ministry.

Research Question 2 Conclusion

RQ 2 sought to explore the perceived impact of retired senior pastors on ministry after they left the church they led. The research demonstrated a clear and definitive conclusion. Based on the interpretation of the lived experiences of the participants, ministry was impacted by retired senior pastors in six different forms. Upon retirement, eight participants left the churches they had led and continued in ministry elsewhere. Four of the participants became interim pastors, serving in a cumulative total of 11 churches. One participant became a senior’s pastor. One became a chaplain, mentoring and caring for 40 pastors and their pastoral staff. One became an unofficial pastor/Bible teacher, ministering to a large retirement community with a population in excess of 150 residents. And one became a Christian camp director of operations.

While each of the eight participants was involved in ministry following retirement, the extent of the impact does not cease with a title, position, or number of ministries they served. Impact revealed by the study was seen in more tangible forms. Participant 1, who began ministering in the retirement community, assumed the responsibility of keeping the church functioning. The person in charge of arranging for church services told this participant, “We were supposed to have church and the speaker just canceled out, so we are not going to have church.” The participant stepped up to the challenge and became the teacher as well as advisor

and counselor to the community. Furthermore, this participant began supporting an African children's center as a short-term missionary.

Participant 2 served as interim pastor in two conflicted churches. In one church he brought order and peace. He commented on his impact to these churches, "God used me, I think, just to give them some peace...I guess what God was preparing me for was to minister to churches in pain." Participant 4 became interim pastor to four churches, three of which were on the verge of closing. This participant was used to stabilize the ministry and help each church locate the appropriate senior pastor to continue their ministry. He had a large impact on all three failing churches becoming stable and productive ministries.

Participant 9 became a chaplain to pastors. Statistics on pastor burnout or moral decay and failure have been a major concern for the better part of the 21st Century. Participant 9's denomination prioritized preventing pastoral burnout and moral weakening. They established the chaplain position to build relationships with the pastor and provide them with a sounding board to vent their emotions and as a confidant to help strengthen their pastors. Participant 9 shared the result of the denominations action. He commented, "We have seen a great decline in moral failures. And we feel like it has at least some relationship to having these chaplains."

Participant 10 had led one church as an interim pastor. The church was in decline and financially troubled when the DS appealed to the participant to "Come and try to resurrect this little church." Participant 10 served this church for six years before seeing it turn the corner towards recovery. He spoke briefly about the turn-around of the church. His comment, "But God has used my gifts."

Data from Participant A1 showed that the participant believed he performed a service that was ineffective. He was interim pastor in four churches, however, he believed he was not able to help the congregations because of a lack of clarity on the part of the district leadership and the congregation. He commented, “But I’ve learned something through this, that may be unique to my experience. And that is, if it’s going to be a successful interim, the District Superintendent must talk with the leadership of the church, as well as the man [pastor] and give clear expectations about what he wants the interim pastor to do. Otherwise, if that does not happen, the man is merely a chaplain.”

Not all participants served in a spiritual capacity. Participant A2 was called out of the pastorate into Christian camp leadership. His task was to “keep the camp running.” The task was beneficial since the participant was responsible for orchestrating all camp functions except camper activities. The research conclusion for question 2 demonstrated that the impact on ministry by retired senior pastors was seen in each of the participants lived experiences.

Research Question 3 Conclusion

This research question was the counterpart to question 2. The purpose of the question was to explore the impact, as perceived by the participant, of the retired senior pastor on ministry by remaining at the church they led. The research showed a verifiable conclusion that retired pastors impact the church they led after they retired.

Two of the 10 participants remained at or returned to the church they led when they retired. Participants 3 and 6 were both senior pastors with more than 40 years as lead pastor of churches. When they remained at the church they led, they transitioned from being a senior

pastor to having a senior pastor (Albers, 2012, p. 21). When a senior pastor retires, he is no longer the one in charge of the ministry. He must remember that he is a God appointed helper.

Participant 3 remained at the church he led. However, his situation was different from other participants. He had no plan to retire. He proposed a merger of the church he led, with a church having a smaller congregation. The participant chose to exchange leadership positions with the younger pastor of the emerging church. Participant 3 became an associate pastor. His expressed motive behind this decision was so that he could focus his ministry helping other pastors and men. He believed he could better serve the people of the church if he didn't have the burden and responsibility of the senior pastor. Two specific comments of this participant communicated his story well. The first was, "My heart goes out to God's people and I want to do everything I can to encourage [them]. Who can better help a pastor than someone who has been a pastor, I know the encouragement that is needed [by pastors]" The second statement is, "I'm not a senior pastor, but I'm still very, very involved in the ministry of the church. I'm more equipped to share from my life experiences than I've ever been in my life."

Research data demonstrated that remaining at the church participant 3 retired from was beneficial to the ministry of the church. The pastor who became the senior pastor through the merger was reported as saying, "you have brought some stability to our church." The seceding senior pastor responded that God had put him in the position to impact men to a fuller degree.

The second participant returned to the church after a denomination required absence of two years. After two years, the church and succeeding pastor, whom the retired pastor chose and mentored to replace him, invited the retired pastor to return to the church. The retired pastor became an associate pastor in charge of the pastoral care ministry. Both participants were able to

free the senior pastor to focus on the overall ministry of their respective churches. In retirement, they assumed a substantial portion of the care for the congregation. Participant 6 commented, “The new pastor welcomed us back and we have the chance to not just be in the church but to actively serve...”

Questions 2 and 3 involve similar circumstances. Question 2 sought to understand the impact of the retired pastor on ministry when he left the church and question 3 sought to understand the impact of the retired pastor on ministry when he remained at the church he led. In both questions the retired senior pastor, the current senior pastor, and the church they choose to attend and minister on, was in transition. While the conclusion of both questions demonstrated the impact of retired senior pastors on ministry, whether they left the church they led or remained at it, the transition was substantially different. The two participants who remained at the church they led prior to retirement had pre-arranged agreements with the succeeding senior pastor, on the roles and responsibilities of each pastor. However, the participants in question 3 did not have the relationship with the succeeding pastor since they did not remain at the church.

Many authors believe transition from being a senior pastor to being a support pastor required planning for it to be successful. The level of success of a transition can be directly tied to the amount of detail in the transition plan. Robertson (2008) wrote that transitions are easier when the person has a step by step plan and follows it. Relationships during transition are critical and must be a part of the plan. Bridges (2003) explains that there are three dynamics to transition: letting go of the old ways and identity, a time of limbo when the old and new identification have not been completely accepted, and coming to the recognition that one is in a new beginning (pp. 1-5).

Another difference between questions 2 and 3 is the treatment of the retiring pastor. Albers (2012) suggests that the succeeding senior pastor should treat the retired senior pastor as a vibrant and indispensable part of the body called the church, indicating that he desired the retired pastor to remain at the church he led (p. 21). Participant A1 provided a comment in the question 2 dialogue that needs repeating since it impacts the relationship between preceding and succeeding senior pastors. He spoke on the respect the senior pastor and congregation need to give to the retired servant of God. His comment was, “My experience had been that if retired pastors and missionaries are not valued, or given a sense of value, they will cause trouble in the church.”

While literature is minimal on how retired pastors are impactful on ministry, the findings from questions 1 and 2 are in line with a study accomplished by Kroeger (1996). His study explored what ministries the retired pastors were involved in. The study involved 70 retired pastors. The pastors were involved in the things pastors normally do. Fifty percent of the pastors served as interim pastors, of this 50 percent, 81 percent served as senior pastors on a full or part time basis. Eighty-two percent occasionally filled the pulpit, 50 percent were involved in visitation and over 85 percent of the 70 participants were involved in some productive ministry during retirement (pp. 132-137). Other literature recommends that retired ministers continue to be involved in similar ministries, on a part-time basis, when they retire (Manners, 2017; Roberts, 2011).

Research Question 4 Conclusions

This question explored the role or position a retired senior pastor plays in the success of the ministry. Table 1 shows a summary of the title, which represents the perceived authority of

each participant in the ministry. Eight of the participants had official titles in their post-retirement ministry. The list of roles shows four of the participants were interim pastors, two were associate pastors, one was a chaplain, one was a director of camp operations at a Christian camp, and two had no official titles.

Following the extensive analysis of data, question 4 was deemed to be of no value to the research. While all except three of the participants had the title or position of pastor, which may be perceived as having a measure of authority and responsibility, the data analysis demonstrated that no participant was enamored with titles or position. Additionally, the title was not considered to have had an influence on the impact the retired senior pastor had on ministry. A statement from the transcript of participant 7, referred to previously, expresses the lack of value of a title. Referring to a comment about how his ministry of encouragement to the people he served unofficially as pastor, he said, "I don't need to be a titled person to have ministry."

Another example of the lack of importance of title is seen in the transcript of participant A1. He had the title of Interim Pastor. He led four churches as interim pastor. His comments on those four churches were that he was merely a "chaplain" and not a pastor. He desired to help the churches with serious problems they were experiencing, however he didn't have the mandate from the District Superintendent. Data reveals that the retired senior pastor believed he was under-utilized and could have been substantially more beneficial to the church if a mandate had been established at the start. As noted in a previous section, his statement demonstrated his frustration. He said, "But I've learned something through this...if it's going to be a successful interim, the District Superintendent...must give clear expectations about what he wants the interim pastor to do." The title had no bearing on the success or failure of the ministry.

The word of God authenticates the premise the participants' data revealed, that titles should have no meaning in ministry. Jeremiah 45:5 states, "But you, are you seeking great things for yourself? Do not seek them..." (New American Standard Bible). Jesus admonished His followers to cease from giving or receiving titles. He spoke, "But do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers. And do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. And do not be called leaders; for One is your leader, that is, Christ. But the greatest among you shall be your servant, and whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted." (Matthew 23:8-12, New American Standard Bible).

The research showed the importance of the ministry to each participant was not in the title they held. The foundation on which their ministry was built was their calling from God, respect for the position they held, and making a difference. Johnson (2002) asserts that to hear God's call is an honor unequalled on human beings. His incomparable beckoning raises us to our true dignity as creatures made in the image and likeness of God (p. 1). The research confirmed this reasoning.

A subtheme (Why Do I Continue to Serve) emerged from the data analysis that provided insight into the reasons retired senior pastors continue to serve following retirement. The data points to the influence of the call of God on the participants life. This is seen in the responses of the participants when asked the question, 'Why do you continue to serve?' Participant 1, who did not have an official title in the ministry he served when he retired, shared three reasons why serving was important to him. The reasons were, there's still a natural fire and energy within, God told him not to be thinking about ministry as in the past, He wasn't through with him yet,

and because of a late-in-life encounter with the Holy Spirit, there's excitement, confidence, and freedom to serve others. He wants to make a difference.

Participant 2 shared three reasons for continuing to serve. First, he enjoyed communicating a coherent picture of God and His grace. Second, he loved encouraging businessmen and leaders. Third, he felt such an anointing when he preached. The reason participant 3 continued to lead was not because there was a need, but because of his love for it. He holds that God put it in his heart to minister to the people. Participant 4 believes God had gifted him for ministry. He commented that, "I love the Church. It's the bride of Christ. I have never lost my love for the bride. And so, it's just fun to see the church of Christ grow and be impacted.

Research Question 5 Conclusion

The purpose of this question was to explore the impact retired senior pastors have on succeeding senior pastors. The original intent of the question was to determine the influence retired senior pastors had on succeeding senior pastors. The researcher added a question during the interview to seek to understand the relationship retired senior pastors had with the senior pastors of the church they led prior to retirement. This question was added in anticipation of half of the participants not remaining at the church they led.

Of the 10 participants, only two participants remained at the church they led when they retired. Data revealed that the relationship between these two retired pastors and their succeeding senior pastors was more than greetings cordial. Participant 3 arranged a merger of two congregations. He proposed that the younger pastor of the smaller church become senior pastor of the combined church so that Participant 3 could focus on supporting the succeeding pastor and

building a men's ministry. He commented, "We have a very, very good relationship. We talk almost every day and I have become a sounding board for him when he needs to unload or rant. I am there to make his ministry a little easier."

Participant 6 left the church he led for two years before returning. He was asked by the succeeding pastor and congregation to return and become an associate pastor, with a focus on pastoral care. His return was not requested because the church was having difficulty, but because of his relationship with the succeeding pastor and the congregation. Participant 6 commented on his return, "They just said, 'we're just so glad to have you back. You know we love (the succeeding pastor), and we are glad for what he is doing. You've been here a long time (32 years as senior pastor), you're 70 years old, you deserve to retire,' All the right things and then to have a chance to not just be in the church, but to actively serve...it's been a blessing."

Eight of the participants, those who left the church they led, had little contact with the pastors who replaced them. All except one of these participants left the church they led to relocate to a different geographical location. Most of them returned to areas where their families lived. Participant 1 contacted the succeeding pastor of the church he led, however, the replacement pastor had little interest in a continuing relationship with him.

The results of question 5 demonstrated that most retired pastors have little contact, and therefore, no significant impact on the pastors that replaced them. There are many factors that contribute to the conclusion. After retirement, the majority of the participants of the study moved from the area they served in. All of the participants became involved substantially in ministry within a very short time of retiring. The majority of participants left the church they led when

they retired. A significant number of the participants believe that the retiring pastor needed to leave the church they pastored when they retire.

Research limitations

Qualitative research is not normally generalizable. It is more focused on particularity rather than generalizability (Creswell, 2014, pp. 203-204). This is the nature of the study design. However, the desired outcome of this study was to conclude that the findings are transferable to other groups of retired pastors not included in the evangelical Protestant cohort. The research findings are most likely not transferable to pastors in denominationally controlled environments, where the retired pastor's involvement is limited by the denomination.

Also, the study focused on the lived experience of retired senior pastors. The participants' perception of their experience was limited to the degree of their ability to recall key events of their story. The group of participants' lived experience provided cohesive and even a sense of correlated data, and the study fulfilled the purpose to explore the impact of retired pastor on ministry in retirement. However, it articulated the need for further research on the subject (see the Further Research section below).

The study did not look in-depth at the number of years retired pastors continue to serve following retirement. It did not explore how many pastors continue to serve after retirement. It did not consider ethnicity in evaluating if race has an impact on the influence of the retired pastor.

Further Research

The research had a specific focus, to explore the impact of retired senior pastors on evangelical Protestant churches in America. The study provided sufficient data confirming that

this cohort of pastors impacts the subject churches. The study laid a step of a foundation which must be built to understand the extent of the impact retired senior pastors will have on the evangelical church in the future. If the Barna Group (2017) and PC(USA) (2017) research on the state of evangelical pastors proves to be an accurate assessment of the future of the evangelical church, and there proves to be a shortage of pastors to fulfill the call to the pastorate, further research is essential.

The further research should use the data from this study as a springboard on which to build an in-depth study involving greater numbers in a quantitative research study. Future research needs to address the number of years retired pastors continue to serve following retirement, the number of retired pastors who continue to serve, the factors which hinder retired pastors from serving.

Chapter Summary

This research demonstrated that retired pastors, through their expressed lived experiences, perceive to have a substantial impact on the evangelical Protestant church in America. The extent to which this was shown was impressive. The data from every one of the participants, selected, without knowledge of their pre- or post-retirement situation, overwhelmingly supported that retired senior pastors continue to serve in significant pastoral positions and roles following retirement. The impact is seen across the spectrum of responsibilities generally attributed to active senior pastors. Their impact is seen as retired pastors' step into unique roles fulfilling temporary long and short-term leadership needs, giving spiritual direction, and offering guidance. It was seen in retired pastors coming

alongside senior pastors, many on voluntary bases. The research showed that the relationships of retired pastors with the succeeding pastor of the church they led is almost non-existent.

The implication of the findings of this study will not be fully appreciated without further research. Further research is necessary to evaluate the extent of involvement by RSPs. If further research substantiates these findings on a much broader scale, the reported potential shortage of pastors may or may not be as great as anticipated in the Barna Group (2017) and PC(USA) (2017) studies.

This study has demonstrated that the call of God on pastors is not taken lightly. Each participant considered their ministry as an extension of who they are. Additionally, the data showed that retired senior pastors viewed their post-retirement service with the same intensity as when they were called into the ministry. The majority of participants in the study noted that they were more excited in ministry now than they had ever been.

For a retiree to comment, “there’s a fire in my belly, and I’m not about to go golfing until Jesus comes” and “there’s an unction in my soul and I need to make a difference” and “I’m more excited about serving Jesus and His church today than ever before”, is pretty good testimony of the caliber of retired pastors having a desire to lead until Jesus calls them home.

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Appendix A

Candidate Interview Questions

1. Are you a retired senior pastor? yes no
2. Are you currently an active senior pastor? yes no
3. Was your last congregation between 200-1000 members? yes no
4. What, if any, are your denominational affiliations? _____
5. Did you remain at the church you led following retirement? yes no
6. If you remained at the church you led, did you feel pressure to leave when you retired? yes no
7. If you left the church you led upon retiring, did you feel as though this was expected of you? yes no
8. Was your departure voluntary or involuntary? yes no
9. Are you willing to participate in a research study? yes no

Appendix B

IRB Application

- IRB application submitted on May 5, 2020
- IRB application identification: IRB-FY-19-20-352

Appendix C

Consent

Title of the Project: Exploring the Perceived Impact of Retired Senior Pastors on the Ministry of Evangelical Churches of America

Principal Investigator: Franklin France DeLange, Doctoral student, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. In order to participate, you must be at least 62 years old; a retired senior pastor within the last 10 years; retired from an American evangelical, Protestant, church; experienced remaining actively involved in ministry following retirement; have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ; have not been asked to leave the ministry due to disciplinary, moral, or ethical reasons.

Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experience of retired senior pastors with respect to their perceived impact on the ministry of the American evangelical Protestant church. The study seeks to understand, in depth, why retired senior pastors continue to serve in ministry following retirement, and, how they perceive the impact they have on ministry during retirement

What will happen if you take part in this study?

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

1. Be available for a 30-45 minute video interview with you. The interview will be audio and video recorded. I will initiate contact with you to establish the interview time.
2. If necessary, be available for a second 30 minute interview which will also be recorded as in #1. This interview will only be necessary to better understand an area from the first interview.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

By participating in this research, you will help the evangelical church understand the value and impact of retired senior pastors on ministry. Your input will help understand how senior pastors benefit from your ministry and the roles retired senior pastors play in the mission of the church. Benefits to society include helping to understand the role that retired senior pastors may play in supporting the church if there is a shortage of pastors. There has been research which paints the

picture that within 10 years there may be many pastors retire. This could seriously impact the number of pastors available for churches.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

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

How will personal information be protected?

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

- Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked, personal computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Interviews will be audio and video recorded and transcribed. Transcription will be accomplished by a professional transcriber who will have access to the audio recordings. All participant identification will be removed from recordings prior to providing them for transcription. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher and transcriber will have access to these recordings.

Is study participation voluntary?

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

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study Frank F. DeLange. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact him at 916-996-3800 or e-mail fdelange@liberty.edu You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Gary J. Bredfeldt, at gjbredfeldt@liberty.edu

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

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

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

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 audio-record and video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date

Appendix D

Participant Interview Questions

RQ1. How do senior pastors know whether to remain at or leave the local church they have led when they retire?

1. What was your experience with leaving the ministry upon retirement?
2. How did you determine whether to remain or leave the church you led?

RQ2. What, if any, is the impact to the ministry if the retired senior pastor leaves the local church they led?

1. What was your involvement in ministry following retirement?
2. How did you see your role in ministry?
3. What was the impact of your role to ministry following retirement?

RQ3. What, if any, is the impact to ministry if the retired senior pastor remains at the local church they led?

1. What was your involvement in ministry following retirement?
2. How did you see your role in ministry?
3. What was the impact of your role to ministry following retirement?

RQ4. What, if any, are the issues when a retired senior pastor is involved in the local church ministry?

1. What were the issues you faced in the local church by being involved in ministry?

RQ5. What, if any, is the benefit for the succeeding pastor if a retired senior pastor is involved in ministry?

1. What was your relationship with the incoming senior pastor?
2. How did your involvement benefit the incoming senior pastor?
3. What are the restrictions to being involved in the local church following retirement?

Appendix E

Research E-mail Invitation

Retired Senior Pastor

Dear Pastor (recipient):

As a graduate student in the School of Divinity at Liberty University. I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctorate degree in Christian leadership. The purpose of my research is to understand why senior retired pastors continue to be ministry focused following retirement. The research will seek to understand the impact of senior retired pastors, as perceived by research participants, on ministry in evangelical, Protestant churches of America and to senior pastors leading churches. I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be 62 years old or older; retired senior pastor within the last 10 years; retired from an American evangelical, Protestant, church; experienced remaining actively involved in ministry following retirement; have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ; have not been asked to leave the ministry due to disciplinary, moral, or ethical reasons.

The procedure for the research is as follows:

1. Participants are be requested to take a nine-question survey (attached) to insure they meet the established requirements for research participants. Survey should take 10 minutes.
2. Candidates will complete a research consent form (attached), necessary for inclusion in the research.
3. Upon receipt of survey results and consent form, 10 eligible candidates will be purposely selected for the research. Two weeks will be set aside for all survey results to be received.
4. Research will be via a single, 30-45 minute video conferencing interview. The researcher will contact each candidate to schedule the interview. Contact will occur within two weeks of receipt of participant's Consent form.
5. In the event an additional interview is necessary, the researcher will contact the participant to schedule the interview.

Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

In order to participate, please complete the survey and sign the consent from at:
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/3M7LXWW>

Sincerely,

Franklin F. DeLange, Doctoral Student and Research Principle

Phone: 916-996-3800

Email: ffdelange14@gmail.com

Appendix F

Expert Panel Review

Following IRB and supervisor approval to proceed with research the researcher will convene a panel of experts for the purpose of evaluating the following:

1. Research participant interview questions
 - Clarity, are each of the questions clear or confusing?
 - Could they be written so as to state the issue more clearly?
 - Do the questions appear to lead or contain bias?
 - Are there other participant questions or feedback which will benefit the research?
2. Protocol
 - Is the protocol clear?
 - Does the protocol flow?
 - Are there improvements or suggestions?
3. Interview Dry Run
 - Did the researcher follow the protocol?
 - How may the researcher improve the process?