

Liberty University John W. Rawlings School Of Divinity

A Model for Pastoral Care and Shepherding of a  
Mid-Sized Growing Church

A Thesis Project Submitted to  
the Faculty of the Liberty University School of Divinity  
in Candidacy for the Degree of  
Doctor of Ministry

by  
Willis D. Wainwright

Lynchburg VA

October 2020

Copyright 2020 by Willis D. Wainwright  
All Rights Reserved

## Acknowledgment

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Mountain View Community Church, church elders, church member who guided me along the pathway during my research.

My wife, and best friend, Pamela, who has always believed in and challenge me since we first meet in San Diego, California during her summer visit.

My two grown children, Noblae and Angelina who gave encouragement and read my paper over and over.

My senior pastor, Dr. Wells, and the staff of Mountain View Community Church.

My mentor for life, Dr. Donald Hicks, who kept me focus on the path.

Dr. Patricia Hicks, who edited this paper.

Liberty University Rawlings School of Divinity

**Thesis Project Approval Sheet**

---

Dr. Donald Q Hicks  
Assistant Professor of Practical Studies

---

Dr. Jerry Sutton  
Adjunct Professor

## THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT

Willis Dean Wainwright

Liberty University School of Divinity, 2020

Mentor: Dr. Donald Q. Hicks

This study addresses the challenges related to the caregiving ministry of Mountain View Community Church located in Temecula, California. This revitalized Church has grown from 50 attendees in 2004 to over 2000 by 2010. The growth has led to many challenges, including the development of a ministry strategy that will meet the needs of the congregation. The leadership team sought to answer the question of an appropriate ministry strategy through examining scriptures, reviewing the history of ministry, and evaluating current models of caregiving used in large Baptist churches. Additionally, a survey of pastoral care methodology employed in large Baptist churches was undertaken. From the study and review of literature, a plan for pastoral care for Mountain View Community Church was developed. A primary result of our research revealed the need for a paradigm shift from clergy to laypersons as primary caregivers.

Thesis project topic abstract length: 141 words

## Contents

Tables .....	viii
Illustrations.....	ix
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
Ministry Context.....	2
Problem Presented.....	5
Purpose Statement.....	6
Basic Assumption.....	6
Definitions.....	7
Theoretical Basis.....	7
Methodology.....	13
Research Design.....	14
Data Analysis.....	15
Limitation and Delimitation.....	15
Thesis Statement.....	16
<b>Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework.....</b>	<b>17</b>
Literature Review.....	17
Search Strategy.....	18
Chapter Organization.....	20
Leadership.....	20
Leadership in the Church.....	22
Declining Church Membership.....	28
Leadership and Church Membership.....	33
Theoretical Foundation.....	38
Theological Underpinning.....	42
Church Membership.....	43
Shepherding.....	44
Chapter Conclusion.....	48
<b>Chapter 3: Research Methodology.....</b>	<b>51</b>
Research Design Synopsis.....	51
The Problem.....	52
Purpose Statement.....	53
Research Design and Methodology.....	53
Setting.....	54
Participants.....	55
Ethical Considerations.....	55
Data Collection Methods and Instruments.....	56
Interviews.....	57
Observation.....	58
Church Record Assessment.....	58
Data Analysis.....	58
Trustworthiness.....	61

<b>Chapter 4: Results</b>	63
Findings	63
Demographics	63
Collection Data	64
Data Analysis	65
Findings	68
Theme 1	68
Theme 2	71
Theme 3	72
Theme 4	74
<b>Chapter 5: Conclusion</b>	78
Interpretation of the findings	82
Limitations	87
Recommendation	88
Implications	89
Conclusion	91
Bibliography	97
Appendix A	102
Appendix B	104
Appendix C	106
Appendix D	110
IRB Approval Letter	112

## Tables

1.	3.1	Overview of Research Design.....	52
2.	3.2	Data Collection Overview.....	57
3.	4.1	Participant Demographics.....	63
4.	4.2	Data Analysis Codes by Data Source.....	66
5.	4.3	Grouping of Codes to Form Themes.....	67



## Illustrations

### Figures

- |    |   |    |
|----|---|----|
| 1. | Braun and Clarke, “Six-Step Model,” <i>“Thematic Analysis.”</i> | 59 |
| 2. | Triangulation of Three Sources of Data                          | 60 |
| 3. | Overview of Pastoral care and Caregiving Recommendation         | 90 |

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

Church membership is in crisis in the United States (U.S.), as the number of people involved in the church continues to fall. In the U.S., church membership continued to decline between the late 1990s to the late 2010s.<sup>1</sup> Church membership fell from 70% in 1998 to half of U.S. citizens in the 20 years.<sup>2</sup> The decreased number in church membership includes a 9-point reduction in the number of religious people; however, the percentage of people who are not religious contributed to the decline. There are many churches that continue to grow while the number of U.S. citizens attending church continues to fall.<sup>3</sup> The churches which continue to grow, face the same social conditions as churches losing members; however, growing churches are capable of encouraging engaged membership among their fellowship. The findings of previous research on the topic of church growth support the roles of leadership and shepherding as key activities encouraging growth in the church.<sup>4</sup> These activities encourage perceptions of received caregiving on the part of new church members, as well as church engagement. While a fecundity of current literature exists on the topic of church leadership, a gap remains in the scope of how leadership in growing churches continue to participate in shepherding and leadership while their numbers grow.

---

<sup>1</sup> Jeffrey M. Jones, "US Church Membership Down Sharply in Past Two Decades." *Gallup*, (2019), para. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., para. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., para. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Sungeun Yang, *Making A Healthy Church: Church Growth Strategy Through Spiritual Mentoring*, Pace, 2019.

## Ministry Context

The role of leadership and shepherding in Christian churches experiencing growth is the ministry context of this research. A decline in the number of congregation members is common across religions in the U.S.; however, the decline is not absolute. Many churches continue to grow despite lower frequencies of religious belief and greater frequency of religious individuals practicing religion outside of the church. The vitality and health of a church depend on the capacity of church leadership, creating and maintaining a relationship with congregants where members of the church perceive leaders of the church to be strong leaders, shepherds, and to utilize caregiving practices.<sup>5</sup> The fecundity of findings of previous research on the topic of church growth support leadership and shepherding as key components of the success of the church; however, a lack in research related to exploring how leaders in the church encourage continuous growth remains.

The relationship between leadership and church growth is well-established in the abundance of scholarly literature on the topic. Wilson was influenced by the decline in church attendance to understand the impact that church leadership has on growth. Wilson's focus was on leadership practices, utilizing the Leadership Practices Inventory, while church membership was measured by the difference in attendance numbers for churches between two points, six months apart.<sup>6</sup> Based on the findings, leadership practices can have a significant and positive impact on church attendance. Ellis supported the impact of leadership on church attendance in his

---

<sup>5</sup> Ruth Powell, Miriam Pepper, N. Hancock, Sam Sterland, and Kathy Jacka, "Models of church vitality: A literature review," *NCLS Research* (2019).

<sup>6</sup> Christopher Jordan Wilson, "Clergy Leadership Styles: The Effects of Leadership Practices on Growth in Urban Church of God Churches in Alabama" (PhD diss., South University, Virginia Beach, 2018).

quantitative examination of the relationship, with conviction and culture included in the study.<sup>7</sup>

The findings support leadership as a factor influencing church attendance; however, the relationship is made more complex based on the issue of conviction and culture. When these findings are taken in conjunction with one another, there is a significant relationship between leadership and church growth; however, leadership should also take a strategic shape where social elements of the Church, such as culture, should remain the focus. The exploration of how that happens has not been explored extensively in previous research, possibly because the nature of most research on the topic was quantitative.

Many of the studies focused on the influence of leadership's impact on church growth were quantitative. Leadership alone is ineffective without a strategy. Mutia's correlational study on the relationship between leadership and church growth included results supporting strategy as a statistically significant predictor of church growth. Further, when church activities are focused on human development, particularly human capital development and personal transformation, leadership is more effective.<sup>8</sup> Jones supports the findings of Mutia, with Jones discovering that leadership will impact church growth, but that when the church also includes formal functions for congregants, the role of leadership on church growth becomes more significant.<sup>9</sup> Brooks also explored the role of leadership on growth through the use of a quantitative, correlational study. Brooks' study was significant because he selected a single leadership paradigm, transformational

---

<sup>7</sup> Shawn Ellis, "Designed To Lead: The Church and Leadership Development," *Journal of Applied Christian Leadership* 11, no. 1 (2017): 99-101.

<sup>8</sup> Peter M. Mutia, "Strategic Leadership and its Influence on Church Growth in Kenya" (PhD diss., United States International University-Africa, 2016).

<sup>9</sup> Christopher Ian Jones, "The Links Between Leadership Qualities and Functions and Local Church Growth within an Anglican Context: a Case Study Approach" (PhD diss., University of Cumbria; awarded by Lancaster University, 2018).

leadership, as the definition of how leadership was constructed in the study.<sup>10</sup> He found that transformational leadership had a statistically significant and positive impact on church growth in Assembly of God churches. Research utilizing inductive reasoning and focused on understanding how leadership works as an influencer of church growth, adds a new dimension to the understanding of the problem because the specific instance of the church and surrounding community will shed new light on how leadership causes church growth. The findings from these pieces of research support the relationship between leadership and church growth; however, the utilization of deductive reasoning limited these studies in terms of just exploring whether relationships existed and not probing how the relationships worked. Therefore, qualitative research is also pivotal in understanding the relationship.

While there is a dearth in literature on the topic of leadership and church growth utilizing a qualitative approach, there are some qualitative studies that explored churches attempting to improve the number of members in their congregation. Jordan utilized a grounded theory framework to explore church growth and leadership.<sup>11</sup> The findings supported leadership and strategy as common traits that supported growth. Jordan's study shares similar traits with the current research. Both are qualitative, utilized interviews are the key means of data collection, and sought to understand how churches grow their congregation. There are differences where the focus of the current research is on exploring growth with a focus on the case of a single church, as well as the location of the current study. Keita also explored how different forms of leadership encouraged church growth. A novel feature of Keita's research was that Keita sought to

---

<sup>10</sup> Robert Allen Brooks, "The Relationship between Transformational Leadership Practices of Pastors and Church Growth in Assembly of God Churches in Tennessee" (PhD diss., Northcentral University, 2018).

<sup>11</sup> Harold Jordan, "Leadership Factors That Influence Church Growth for Western North Carolina Churches of God" (DMin diss., Liberty University, 2019).

understand the issue of leadership in the church from the standpoint of two theoretical frameworks: full-range leadership theory and servant leadership theory.<sup>12</sup> The inclusion of both theories was unconventional because, as noted by Keita, both leadership theories are typically explored through the use of scales in quantitative research.<sup>13</sup> The findings included support for leadership in churches seeking to grow their congregation. Themes included the existence of ideal church leadership styles, church leadership management, and leadership that encourages growth. While Keita focused on specific leadership theories as to the theoretical framework, the current study will not delimit exploration by any leadership paradigm.

### **Problem Presented**

The problem that this project will address is the role of leadership as an activity that improves church membership and how church leadership and shepherding encourage church growth. The activities of leadership characterize church growth in the context of encouraging fellowship and followership.<sup>14</sup> Leadership strategies are essential to address a congregation<sup>15</sup> and remain a pivotal factor driving growth for many churches;<sup>16</sup> however, growth cannot be the only objective of the church, and the challenges caused by growth should not disrupt the capacity to lead and shepherd.<sup>17</sup> The role of shepherding in the church, particularly as it pertains to new

---

<sup>12</sup> Yera Keita, "Leadership Styles and Their Impact on Church Growth in Alexandria and Springfield, Virginia" (PhD diss., Walden University, 2019).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Liston Page Jr., *Interpreting the Ancient Archaic Text Using Contemporary Pedagogical Methods for Church Growth* (Madison, NJ: Drew University, 2018).

<sup>15</sup> Kim Sutherland, "How Lay Leadership Roles and Responsibilities Are Vital to Church Growth and Ministry Church Growth and Ministry," *Leadership UMC-North Georgia Conference*, (2017).

<sup>16</sup> Jones, "The Links Between Leadership Qualities."

<sup>17</sup> Mary F. Stone and Sheri L. Erickson, "Hometown Community Church: Opportunities and Challenges of Continued Growth," *Issues in Accounting Education* 32, no. 3 (2017): 129-136.

members of the congregation, remains a crucial element and has been so since the time of the Old Testament.<sup>18</sup> As discussed in John 10:11, clergy have a mandate to ensure adequate congregation shepherding and caregiving based on the example of Christ. Church leadership must develop and follow procedures of pastoral caregiving and shepherding to adequately undertake the plan of growing the church as leadership is a crucial trait influencing growth, vitality, and health of a church.<sup>19</sup> Hence, churches must address the role of leadership as an activity, which improves church membership and how church leadership and shepherding encourage church growth.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative case study research is to understand how leaders improve church membership and how leadership and shepherding encourage church growth. Based on the findings of previous research, church membership decline is a trend that continues to grow in general; however, there are some churches that are growing. The objective of the research is to explore a case where church membership has increased to understand how membership increased in light of leadership and shepherding practices of church leaders. The benefit of this research is the possible improvement of church membership.

### **Basic Assumptions**

Several assumptions exist in this study. One fundamental assumption is that people involved in the administration of the church or who hold prominent formal roles in the church, are leaders in the church. In many cases, leaders are also individuals who emerge from a group.

---

<sup>18</sup> Jon Pedersen, "Making Time for Growth: Discipleship for the Families of Shepherd of the Hill Lutheran Church" (DMin diss., Fuller University, 2016).

<sup>19</sup> Powell, et al., sl. 2.

Some administrators may fail to use their authority to be a leader. In this study, people with prominent formal roles in the church are assumed to hold leadership roles. Another assumption is that church leaders maintain a position in shepherding. The core of this research remains on the assumption that leaders also act as shepherds in the church. They care for new members of the congregation by shepherding. Another assumption in this study is that growth is, in some way, attributed to the activities of leaders in the church. Other factors could result in church member growth. Population growth, social norm changes, and closings of local churches are factors that could influence church member numbers to change.

### **Definitions**

Caregiving: Caregiving is the act of giving care and looking after another person that requires care.

Fellowship: The close association between people who all share similar interests and activities.

Followership: The behaviors and activities of individuals in a subordinate role where they follow the lead of a leader.

Leadership: A relationship between an individual and a group of people where the leader encourages motivation.

Shepherding: The use of careful management and guidance of members of the congregation.

### **Theoretical Basis**

Shepherding is the most critical part of the pastoral ministry. As the Lord Jesus was preparing to leave, he asked Peter if he truly loved him. Three times, Peter confessed to loving



him and was charged with the responsibility to “feed my lambs” (John 21:15), “take care of my sheep” (John 21:17). According to Rummage, shepherding involves tending, guarding, and leading.<sup>20</sup> Leading involves providing care to those with spiritual emotional, spiritual, financial, and physical aid. Every individual desires to be cared for, and for the new convert, care is critical. The pastor needs to provide or assign someone the role of providing care.

The caring model adopted by the pastor defines the spirit of acceptance within the church. According to Clarke, pastoral care includes proving spiritual leadership, marrying, counseling, and intervention during a crisis.<sup>21</sup> The modern church needs to equip, mobilize, empower, and support ordinary Christians.<sup>22</sup> Small churches allow Christians to foster positive and meaningful relationships that enable them to nurture one another. The compact nature of small churches implies that they are better equipped to offer the desired care. The literature agrees that a growing church requires an effective shepherding.<sup>23</sup>

Rummage suggests King David’s example of shepherding. In Psalms 23, David compares the love of God to the believer, to that of the shepherd and his sheep.<sup>24</sup> David highlights a beautiful relationship between the Lord as the shepherd and his sheep. The pastors, as the custodians of the Lord’s teachings, must be identical to their Master’s pastoral care by providing an opportunity for the sheep to rest, refresh, experience renewal, restoration, righteousness,

---

<sup>20</sup> Aaron, J. Rummage, “A Model for Pastoral Care and Shepherding of a Large and Growing Church” (DMin diss., Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 2005).

<sup>21</sup> Andrew D. Clarke, *A Pauline Theology of Church Leadership* Vol. 362. (A&C Black), 2008.

<sup>22</sup> Rummage, “A Model for Pastoral Care,” n.p.

<sup>23</sup> Keith Robinson, “The Senior Pastor's Role and Responsibilities in Leading a Pastoral Staff” (DMin diss., Liberty University, 2010).

<sup>24</sup> Rummage, “A Model for Pastoral Care,” n.p.

acceptance, blessings, and comfort, among others. Pastors can apply various methods, such methods may be philosophical or biblical. Analyzing each of the models, their strengths, and their weaknesses will help in designing a proper model for pastoral care.

Several researchers on pastoral care have been conducted in the past. Barry G. Lawson's work, "Lay Shepherding: Developing a Pastoral Care Ministry for the Small to Mid-sized Church" surveys the Wesleyan churches and provides a proof of the biblical and historical gift of the laity for ministry and shepherding of God's children. Quoting Dr. Steinbron's work, Lawson presents a model that small and mid-sized churches can adopt to implement the lay shepherding ministry.<sup>25</sup> Dr. Melvin Steinbron's research on lay driven pastoral care, is one of the most important works in pastoral care. Dr. Steinbron's books have helped churches lay ministry projects by helping hundreds of congregations and new converts.

Janet Ramsey in the article "First Do No Harm: Pastoral Care Informed by Job," noted that "even if anxiety is out of control and words fail us, we, the Christian caregivers have marvelous resources not available to others: word and sacrament and the prayers of the people pastoral care brings hope."<sup>26</sup> Whether it is reading the passage from the Bible, offering communion to a homeless person, or simple prayers for those hurting, caregiving brings rejuvenation and is as refreshing as a cup of cold water to the thirsty.<sup>27</sup> Janet's book provides important insights into the importance of caring for the needy and some of the important methods of offering care.

---

<sup>25</sup> Barry G. Lawson, "Lay Shepherding: Developing a Pastoral Care Ministry for the Small to Mid-Sized Church" (DMin diss., Liberty University, 2005).

<sup>26</sup> Janet L. Ramsey, "First Do No Harm: Pastoral Care Informed by Job," *Word & World* 31, no. 4 (2011).

<sup>27</sup> Janet L. Ramsey, "First Do No Harm," 37.

A survey of the traditional sources regarding lay ministry provides important information on trends in both the ministry and the congregation.<sup>28</sup> The Alban Institute has an informative website that provides several books and articles relating to the modern lay ministry.<sup>29</sup> The Stephen ministry website provides important materials and training programs for lay shepherding. The articles and the books help in designing the proper model for pastoral care for a mid-sized growing church.

Arlin Rothauge, in his booklet *Sizing Up a Congregation for New Member Ministry*, describes different categories of churches according to sizes. This categorization helps in understanding and laying the basic behaviors expected of the clergy at each category. For instance, a mid-sized growing church can be categorized as a pastoral church with 50-150 active members.<sup>30</sup> At this category, the clergy is at the center of all activities in the Church and gives directions to the congregants, as well as enjoy a personal relationship with everyone. Thus, strong interpersonal and leadership skills are required of such clergy. According to Roy M. Oswald in *How To Minister Effectively in Family, Pastoral, Program, and Corporate-Sized Churches*, “Outgoing, expressive persons seem to be the best match for the style of ministry in the Pastoral Church. An open, interactive leadership style also seems to suit this size church best.”<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> Rummage, "A Model for Pastoral Care," n.p.

<sup>29</sup> The Alban Institute, Suite 100, 2121 Cooperative Way, Herndon, VA. 20171, (800) 486-131.

<sup>30</sup> Arlin Rothauge, *Sizing Up a Congregation for New Member Ministry* (New York: The Episcopal Church Center, 2004).

<sup>31</sup> Roy, M. Oswald, *How To Minister Effectively in Family, Pastoral, Program, and Corporate-Sized Churches. Action Information* (1991) p.1-7.

Adding on the qualities of the clergy of a small-to-mid-sized church, Carl Dudley, in *Unique Dynamics of the Small Church*, notes that a clergy must be caring so that both members, as well as their visitors, have adequate pastoral care. On the outcome of this, he says, “People well cared for pastorally are inclined to invite their friends and family members to become affiliated with their parish.”<sup>32</sup> Talking of how to manage a mid-sized church, pastors are advised in *The Grasshopper Myth* to stop thinking like a big church and start adopting shepherding rather than ranching model.<sup>33</sup> In the shepherding model, the Pastor is in a one-on-one relationship with the congregants. However, in the ranching model, the pastor delegates care of his flock to several shepherds under him. In a small church, the ranching model leaves the congregation feeling neglected, which may lead to a decline in membership as people migrate to other churches.

Nevertheless, as the size of the church changes from small to medium size, the leadership strategy of shepherding also needs adjustment to conform to the increase. As Dr. Timothy Keller argues, there is something called “size culture” in shepherding, which greatly influences how decisions are made.<sup>34</sup> This further demonstrates the dynamics of shepherding and church management. From these sentiments, it is clear that pastoral care is intertwined with the growth of the church. Thus, as the church grows from small to mid-size, the shepherd bears the obligation of empowering laypersons to help in the role of pastoral care.<sup>35</sup> According to Lawson, both biblical and historical foundations reveal that laity is gifted for ministry and, thus, calling of

---

<sup>32</sup> Carl Dudley, *Unique Dynamics of the Small Church* (Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 1984).

<sup>33</sup> Karl Vaters, *The Grasshopper Myth: Big Churches, Small Churches and the Small Thinking that Divides Us* (NewSmallChurch.com, 2013).

<sup>34</sup> Timothy Keller, *Leadership and Church Size Dynamics: How Strategy Changes with Growth* (Redeemer City-to-City, 1998).

<sup>35</sup> A. V. Campbell, *Rediscovering Pastoral Care* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1986).

shepherding God's flock.<sup>36</sup> Thus, delegating some pastoral roles to the laity is a good way of ensuring that the needs of all members are met and cared for.

From the review of sources, it emerges that successful shepherding requires a model for care. Ronald Edwin Hughes discusses the C.A.R.E model, which is highly essential in shepherding. He notes, "A well-developed pastoral care ministry in the church offers care for the congregation, and an opportunity to reach the unchurched by demonstrating compassion".<sup>37</sup> He adds that in order to nurture a healthy congregation and fulfill the scriptural admonitions, shepherds need to develop a strategy that focuses on the pastoral needs of the Church. Similarly, in *Models of Christian Counseling, Coaching, and Pastoral Care* by Robert H. Munson, the author suggests that there are several methods of providing care to Christians. Arguably, some of these methods are Christian or biblical, while others are not.

Nevertheless, he further notes that the strategies are divided into two, which are a model of Christian counseling and a model of Christian coaching.<sup>38</sup> Christian coaching, for instance, is directly related to shepherding because it is aimed at ensuring growth.<sup>39</sup> Thus, shepherds need to focus on this model to ensure the growth and well-being of their congregation.

A discussion of shepherding cannot be complete without mentioning the biblical basis. First, a shepherd's identity is mentioned in several verses where he is described as a "pastor" and "elder" (Ephesians 4:11; 1 Peter 5:2).<sup>40</sup> These identities are used to signify maturity, experience,

---

<sup>36</sup> Lawson, *Lay Shepherding*.

<sup>37</sup> Ronald Edwin Hughes, "Shepherding the Flock: C.A.R.E – A Model for Pastoral Ministry" (DMin diss., Liberty University, 2015).

<sup>38</sup> Robert Munson, "Models of Christian Counseling, Coaching, and Pastoral Care," (BCPC Bukal Life Care, 2014).

<sup>39</sup> Derek Tidball, *Skillful Shepherds: An Introduction to Pastoral Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996).

<sup>40</sup> John Davis, *The Perfect Shepherd; Studies in the 23 Psalm* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1979).

dignity, and wisdom, which give him the authority to oversee the flock.<sup>41</sup> Similarly, several verses mention the responsibilities of a shepherd.<sup>42</sup> For example, to feed, protect the flock from wolves, and give care are captured in several verses (1 Peter 5:2; Acts 20:28, Acts 20:28-31, and 1 Peter 5:2).<sup>43</sup> Given the responsibility to lead, feed, and protect the flock, shepherds are directly given authority by God and governed by the Holy Spirit, which directs them on the right paths (1 Peter 5:2, Acts 20:28, and 1 Timothy 3:5).

Further, shepherds must acknowledge that the chief shepherd is the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the shepherd of the shepherds (1 Peter 5:4).<sup>44</sup> Besides, shepherds have a promised reward as captured in the scriptures (1 Peter 5:4). The reward is a special crown in heaven, however, on earth, shepherds receive very little rewards over their lives.<sup>45</sup> Thus, being a shepherd is a privilege and a calling, but it also comes with great challenges that shepherds must be ready to tackle.

### **Methodology**

A qualitative case study approach will be taken in this study. A qualitative approach to the study is the most appropriate method because the capacity of the church to grow with such expedience and robustness is unique, and by examining the case through the utilization of a qualitative method, understanding the phenomenon is possible. A quantitative method would not be an appropriate method for this case because there is no scholarly basis for measuring factors as being significant to the growth of the church. The outcome of church growth could be caused

---

<sup>41</sup> J.D. Douglas, 'Shepherd,' The New Bible Dictionary (London: Richard Clay & Company Ltd, 1962).

<sup>42</sup> Robert L. Deffinbaugh, The Good Shepherd and the Flock of God. *I Will Build my Church*, 2004.

<sup>43</sup> Laird Harris, Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament vol. 2 (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980).

<sup>44</sup> John Walvoord, The Bible Knowledge Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985).

<sup>45</sup> T. C. Oden, *Pastoral Theology: Essentials of Ministry* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 1983).

by several different factors; however, unless there is a theoretical basis for examining the impact of factors on the outcome of church growth, there is the possibility that confounding variables could have had an impact on the significance or insignificance of findings.

The research design in this study is a case study design. Case studies can either be single-case or multiple-case, dependent on the number of cases under investigation in the study. In this study, only a single case is included in the research: the Mountain View Church. The phenomenon of rapid church growth in an era where church participation is continuously shrinking in size is at the core of this study. Other forms of the design were considered for this research. An ethnography was considered for this research; however, an ethnography would require a level of immersion into the culture and community of the church that would not be feasible. A phenomenological design was also considered for this research. A phenomenological approach could be appropriate for this research; however, a phenomenology place greater focus on experience and consciousness. While experience could be one of the factors driving church growth at Mountain View Church, research should support the relevance of experience before it is investigated.

## **Research Design**

A qualitative case study is the research design at the center of this study, and the Mountain View Church is the location at which this study is focused. The case study will rely on the use of semi-structured interviews, observation, and document review to collect data. Observation will take place both when church is in session and when church is not in service. When church is in session, observation will include an examination of the congregation and church leadership to understand the relationship between them in the church setting. When church is not in session, church leader activities during days when the church is not in service

will also be observed to understand the role that factors such as administration and preparation play in the success of the church. Semi-structured interviews will be utilized to explore the feelings of church leadership and the congregation. Following service, members of the congregation will be asked to take part in interviews. These interviews will be semi-structured and focus on understanding the relationship between congregation members and the church. Leadership in the church will also be interviewed. The focus of these interviews will be on understanding perceptions related to church growth and what leadership considers as unique from the way that other churches operate. Documents related to the church's organization, marketing, and advertising plans will be reviewed to understand the role that they play in the success of the church.

**Data Analysis.** Data Analysis will be handled through the use of a thematic approach. Thematic data analysis relies on a four-step process that begins with the coding of data. Data will be coded according to key elements of what is said in interviews, observed or present in documents. Following coding, codes will be grouped into categories. These categories will represent labeling of the common elements of codes. Following categorization will be the conceptualization. In conceptualization, the way that categories fit together will be elucidated. Thematic analysis will be completed through the utilization of the digital tool NVivo. NVivo is a qualitative data analysis tool that is relied upon to code key. The data will then be organized along the lines of major findings in the research.

### **Limitations and Delimitations**

There are several limitations to this study. The research relies heavily on the practice of self-reporting and semi-structured interviews with the leadership of several mid-sized churches. The self-reporting data collection strategy may result in the inclusion of incorrect, exaggerated,



or false responses. A positive image is typically vital for church leaders. Respondent bias could result in inaccurate responses. For example, a leader could fail to acknowledge the challenge of leadership struggles. The research includes observation as a second data collection strategy. Comparison of church activity and leadership observation findings to the findings from interview data are means of ascertaining where bias existed in leader responses. Time constraints will limit the observation methodology because church leaders are most accessible only a few days a week. Sunday except for special meetings such as choir and worship practice. The research may fail to gather extensive data from a wide area due to the time factor and the availability of the church community. The geographic limitation is Mountain View Community Church and local churches.

Several delimitations exist in this study. The research will not focus on race or political party alignment. The research will ignore the pending stereotypes and the entire racism issue in place of the study focusing on church traditions, practices, and doctrines concerning the biblical teaching of service to others (Matthew 24:45-50), and good shepherding (John 10:10). The study delimits to Protestant churches because the Catholic Church has unique doctrines and practices that may not apply to the study. The research will not focus on different categories of people, such as men, women, and children.

### **Thesis Statement**

The shepherding and leadership that members of a congregation experience have an impact on their engagement in the church and their motivation to involve other people in the community in the church as well, which in turn supports church growth.

## Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework

### Literature Review

#### Introduction

In the United States, there is a concerning decrease in the membership of the church congregation.<sup>46</sup> Previous research indicates a link between leadership and the increased membership and conviction of driving church growth. Attendance in the church is critical to following and worshiping the Word of God and Lord Jesus. Yet, memberships continue to decline.<sup>47</sup> Further, reliance on technology and an increasingly populated world has led to a decreased reliance on the church for worship; however, the impact that this has on the community relationship between the congregation, the pastor, and God remains unseen.<sup>48</sup> Most notable, between 2004 to 2014, church attendance in the United States decreased from 43% to 36%.<sup>49</sup> Additionally, there has been a 30% reduction in Evangelical Lutheran Churches in the United States. Furthermore, most church members averaged under 100 individuals on Sunday. For smaller and more rural churches this decline is more significant.<sup>50</sup> These declines are not purely representative of a decrease in faith. Instead, many religious Americans are less likely to

---

<sup>46</sup> Yera Keita, "Leadership Styles."

<sup>47</sup> Rachel A. Jones, "Exploring Challenges of Church Vitality in the General Culture of Declining Membership: A Case Study" (PhD diss., University of Phoenix, 2016).

<sup>48</sup> Jarvis Baker, "Leadership Matters: The Process of Leading a Declining Church to Revitalization Utilizing Early Church Principles" (DMin diss., Liberty University, 2018).

<sup>49</sup> Charles Eugene Sumpter, "Declining Church Attendance: Five Reasons Why Millennials have Stopped Attending Church" (DMin diss., Liberty University, 2019).

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 4

attend church to worship God, but instead choose to stay at home for the purpose of worshiping.<sup>51</sup>

According to a recent Gallup Poll (2019),<sup>52</sup> this decline presents an issue that may greatly impact the ability for churches to provide care, comfort, and monetary care to those in need. However, there is a lack of examinations that assess the connection between leadership and congregation growth within the church. Further, there is a lack of assessments that consider shepherding, culture, and pastoral caring in the role of engaging church members to remain in the congregation. The problem that this project will address is the role of leadership as an activity that improves church membership and how church leadership and shepherding encourage church growth. Continued growth of church congregations are critical to delivering the Word of Christ and fostering a sense of spiritual community.<sup>53</sup> In this chapter, a review of the literature that pertains to the purpose of this study will be examined. First, the search strategy that was used to obtain appropriate information is provided in the following section.

### **Search Strategy**

The search strategy for this literature review included assessing a series of set databases using keywords related to the purpose of this study. The databases used included: Google Scholar, EBSO, Science Direct, SpringerLink, JSTOR, and EBSCOHost. The following keywords were used to locate the most appropriate literature: *leadership, leadership in the church, church engagement, conviction, church culture, importance of church membership, role*

---

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Gallup. U.S. Church Membership Down Sharply in Past Two Decades. Retrieved from <https://news.gallup.com/poll/248837/church-membership-down-sharply-past-two-decades.aspx>

<sup>53</sup> Mary F. Stone and Sheri L. Erickson, "Hometown Community Church: Opportunities and Challenges of Continued Growth," *Issues in Accounting Education* 32, no. 3 (2017): 129-136.

*of leadership in the church, role of leadership in church membership, declining church membership, shepherding and church leadership.*

The database examinations revealed a total of 85 sources from peer-reviewed sources. Primarily all sources were drawn from 2016-2019 to ensure that current literature was used. However, some resources before 2016 were used to provide foundational information and theoretical basis for this study. Next, the organization of this chapter is presented in the following section.

## **Chapter Organization**

In the following sections, leadership is broadly discussed first, to provide context to the examination of leadership in the church. Afterwards, church engagement, conviction, and culture are considered as presented in academic literature. Following, the importance of church membership, the role of leadership in church membership, and the foundation of shepherding are reviewed. The discussion of the current issue of declining church membership is also presented. Finally, a theoretical foundation and a discussion of the theological underpinnings are presented.

## **Leadership**

In this section, a general review of leadership is provided. In particular, these will be connected in the following section to church leadership. Leadership has been variably studied throughout history. Great focus has been applied towards examining key definitions and characteristics for effective leadership.<sup>54</sup> Researchers firstly examined the key characteristics that were ideal for a leader to have to lead followers.<sup>55</sup> Additionally, previous assessments were

---

<sup>54</sup> Silva, Alberto. "What is Leadership?" *Journal of Business Studies Quarterly* 8, no. 1 (2016): 1.

<sup>55</sup> Despoina Karagianni, and Anthony Jude Montgomery, "Developing Leadership Skills Among Adolescents and Young Adults: A Review of Leadership Programs," *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth* 23, no. 1 (2018): 86-98.

based on exploring if leadership was inherent or developed throughout practice and training. One example of this was Karagianni and Montgomery's assessment of leadership skills that were developed in young adults. The authors performed an assessment of previous academic literature to assess how leadership skills are developed. The authors reported that leadership is developed in young adults through programs that nurture skills that will be useful in leadership roles later in life. Such findings are mirrored by multiple academic assessments that report that leadership is a skill that is primarily developed; however, some individuals may exhibit a natural tendency for leadership skills and roles.<sup>56 57 58</sup>

Leadership examinations are also centered around the ability to lead through an authentic and self-reliant nature.<sup>59 60</sup> These assessments were then expanded to include broad definitions of leadership based upon categories, such as transformational and transactional leadership models.<sup>61 62</sup> For example, researchers such as Shamir and Eilam noted leadership is developed around the lived experiences and inspiring their surrounding team to be moved toward aims and

---

<sup>56</sup> Rachel Clapp-Smith, Michelle M. Hammond, Gretchen Vogelgesang Lester, and Michael Palanski, "Promoting Identity Development in Leadership Education: A Multidomain Approach to Developing the Whole Leader," *Journal of Management Education* 43, no. 1 (2019): 10-34.

<sup>57</sup> Seemiller, Corey, and Kerry L. Priest, "Leadership Educator Journeys: Expanding a Model of Leadership Educator Professional Identity Development." *Journal of Leadership Education* 16, no. 2 (2017).

<sup>58</sup> Luthans, Fred, and Bruce J. Avolio. "Authentic Leadership Development." *Positive Organizational Scholarship* 241 (2003): 258.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> George, Bill, Peter Sims, Andrew N. McLean, and Diana Mayer, "Discovering your Authentic Leadership," *Harvard Business Review* 85, no. 2 (2007): 129.

<sup>61</sup> Bass, Bernard M., and Ronald E. Riggio. *Transformational Leadership*. Psychology press, 2006.

<sup>62</sup> Bass, Bernard M., and Bruce J. Avolio, eds. *Improving Organizational Effectiveness through Transformational Leadership* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1994).

objectives that meet the vision and the motivation of organization.<sup>63</sup> However, throughout these traditional examinations there was a lack of a clear definition of leadership.<sup>64</sup>

Initial assessments were guided by researchers such as Silva<sup>65</sup> provided a foundational review of the definition of leadership based upon examinations of transactional and transformational leadership by Bass in the 1990s<sup>66</sup> systematic review of previous leadership that provides a general summary of these issues. The author posed three definitions that are central to leadership discussions. These included (1) the process of leadership as a quality, (2) that leadership occurs uniquely within each of the contexts, (3) that a leader will use specific processes for the purpose of ensuring followers are guided towards an aim or objectives, and (4) that a leader and followers share a similar ideology. Thus, according to Silva, leadership is the “process of interactive influence that occurs when, in a given context, some people accept someone as their leader to achieve common goals.”<sup>67</sup> In terms of the church, the shared ideologies include the Word of God and are unified during congregational meetings.<sup>68</sup> Following, a furthered understanding of leadership in the church is presented.

---

<sup>63</sup> Boas Shamir, and Galit Eilam, ““What's Your Story?” A Life-Stories Approach to Authentic Leadership Development,” *The Leadership Quarterly* 16, no. 3 (2005): 395-417.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>66</sup> B. M. Bass, “From Transactional to Transformational Leadership: Learning to share the vision”. *Organizational Dynamics*, Winter (1990), 19-31.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>68</sup> J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership: Principles of Excellence for Every Believer* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2017).

## Leadership in the Church

Leadership in the church is defined by the central aim of following and spreading the Word of God.<sup>69</sup> Historically, leading within the church was a divine and noble endeavor.<sup>70</sup> However, such endeavors were not always followed as a means of leading the parish towards God. Instead, some historical leaders were led astray and strove for greatness for themselves and not their church members. However, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, church leaders look back upon these examples as guidance to avoid the fallings of past figures.<sup>71</sup> In this section, a review of the academic explorations of church leadership is presented. In particular, focus is paid towards assessments that illustrate the challenges and benefits of ideal leadership.

Previous assessments of church leadership are focused towards member commitment through qualitative assessments. Song<sup>72</sup> performed an assessment of hermeneutic assessment of Chinese and American leadership to examine face management and servant leadership. The author noted that there was previously a lack of assessments regarding church leadership and the impact of ideal leadership models. Further, the author noted that previous assessments ignore the understanding of cultural values that play a role in the protection of their membership. As such, the author explored face management and servant leadership in a sample of church leaders in China and the United States. Thematic analysis was used to approach the examination of the resultant interviews. Eight major themes were revealed that led to the understanding of church leadership. These included: (1) face experiences and body, (2) face experiences and triggers, (3)

---

<sup>69</sup> Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership*, 7.

<sup>70</sup> Roger Auguste Petry, "Shepherding Sustainable Development: Possible Lessons on Leadership from Judaism and the Early Christian Church," In *Sustainability and the Humanities*, pp. 561-573. Springer, Cham, 2019.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>72</sup> Jiying Song, "Face Management and Servant-Leadership: A Hermeneutic Phenomenological Study of Chinese and American Christian Church Leaders" (Dissertation, George Fox University, 2018).

face experiences and becoming, (4) face experiences and face concepts, (5) face experiences and servant-leadership, and (6) face experiences within the church. Through this, the author established that servant leadership is critical to providing a genuine leadership to the membership of the church. Indicating that the key role of church leaders is to ensure servant leadership, which is humbling oneself underneath in the name of God, central to providing ideal leadership within the church.

Previous assessments also include the understanding of national leadership upon Pakistani Christian institutions. Lall, Aziz, and Quraishi noted that recent nationalization in Pakistan has led to changes in Christian institutions.<sup>73</sup> The authors explored the lived experiences of Christian higher education institutions during the change to nationalism. For this purpose, the authors assessed interviews with seven Christian participants that lived and worked in Christian higher educational institutions in Pakistan. Subsequently, the interviews were thematically analyzed, which revealed five themes: (1) nationalization origin, (2) positive and negative impacts of nationalization, (3) causes of leadership decline, (4) and the strategies that can be used for the purpose of furthering Christian academic research. Lall et al. concluded that nationalization had improved the access to Christian leadership and academic training. Further, that there is a critical need for future studies to examine how leadership in the church can positively impact membership. The work of Lall et al. is important as it provides context for the understanding of leadership globally within the church.

Researchers also examined the understanding of heroic and servant leadership styles

---

<sup>73</sup> Priscilla Lall, Fakhra Aziz, and Uzma Quraishi, "Effects of Nationalization on Leadership of Pakistani Christian Institutions," *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences (PJSS)* 39, no. 4 (2019): 1599-1612.



within the assessment in the church. Robertson<sup>74</sup> emphasized the need for further assessments regarding how Christian theological leadership impacts membership following and promotes the dialogue between the church and parishioners. For the purpose of this study, the authors performed a content analysis assessment regarding theological analysis of servant leadership and heroic leadership. Robertson concluded that a heroic and servant leadership ideally enhances social conversations within the membership of the church. Further, the use of either heroic or servant leadership brings together the congregation through an increased dialogue. The work of the authors illustrates that dialogue and the inclusion of a God-centered ideology is an ideal model for positive outcomes within the membership. However, how these methodologies serve to impact and increase church membership is unclear.

Assessments of church leadership are also configured around exploring the ideal characteristics needed. Watt<sup>75</sup> provided an examination of the principles that are ideal for effective church leadership. The author did not perform an empirical assessment, but instead based the following principles for effective church leadership upon his past experience within the church. These five principles included: mission, conflict management, power and influence, collaboration, emotions are facts forgiveness, reconciliation, and love. Watt<sup>76</sup> argued that through these tenants that the church leader can instill ideal values within the church membership. Further, through these efforts church membership can be retained, and the Word of God will be further established in the congregation. The author's work illustrates one of the basic

---

<sup>74</sup> Deborah Robertson, "A Theological Perspective on Heroic Leadership in the Context of Followership and Servant Leadership," *Heroism Science* 2, no. 1 (2017): 3.

<sup>75</sup> Willis M. Watt, "Relational Principles for Effective Church Leadership," *Journal of Leadership Education* 13, no. 2 (2014): 125-139.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

explorations of church leadership; however, the assessment falls short of providing clarification on how these factors are related to increasing church membership in the United States.

Previous researchers also examined the relationship between job satisfaction and servant leadership within the church. Thompson<sup>77</sup> examined servant leadership through assessing job satisfaction in the church. In the assessment, the author assessed 116 employees that were actively involved within the church leadership. For the assessment, a survey was applied to the participants that was based upon the Organizational Leadership Assessment and the revised Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire. Afterwards, these results were quantitatively assessed to examine the understanding of how job satisfaction was connected to servant leadership models. The authors concluded that there was a significant relationship between the proposed use of servant leadership within the church and job satisfaction. Indicating that the use of a biblically based approach to leadership was ideal to increased job satisfaction and happiness within life. Thompson's assessment illustrates the traditional nature of leadership explorations and illustrates a focus upon leadership characteristics. However, the assessment provided by Thompson did not provide a foundation for understanding how leadership activities and shepherding models are critical in increasing church membership.

Assessments regarding church leadership has also included the examination of the intersection between the community and the leadership that is provided throughout the church. Bilezikian<sup>78</sup> presented an examination that considered community and church leadership. The author emphasized that there is a critical need for church leadership that involves the community. Further, the author argued that church leadership should be a team approach that includes the

---

<sup>77</sup> Robert S. Thompson, "The Perception of Servant Leadership Characteristics and Job Satisfaction in a Church-related College" (PhD diss., Indiana State University, 2002).

<sup>78</sup> Gilbert Bilezikian, "Church Leadership that Kills Community," *Priscilla Papers* 21, no. 4 (2007): 5-7.

congregation and the younger members that could serve as leaders potentially within the future.

However, the author did not provide an empirical examination that drew from qualitative or quantitative assessments. Yet, the assessment<sup>79</sup> does provide an exploration of the significance of church leadership as it pertains to congregation and community involvement.

In terms of leadership preparation, Abney<sup>80</sup> provided an assessment that explored how leadership is developed in the church. Further, the author considered the basis for current pastoral preparation programs to assess the effectiveness of these for unifying church congregations. The author reviewed the current programs through the application of a 44- question instrument that assessed demographics, academic qualifications. Additionally, characteristics of competence and chemistry were explored with a 12-point Likert scale. These were applied to six pastoral groups across the United States. Overall, 1,000 pastors were surveyed for the purpose of the study.

Resultantly, Abney reported that differences in education did not lead to critical changes in leadership style or character. However, character was defined by the alignment with the aim of improving the church. Additionally, receiving continuous higher education and professional training throughout their career indicated a higher likelihood to be able to be effective leaders and connect the congregation to the values and mission statement of the church. The researcher's examinations illustrate one of the factors that leads to effective church leadership. Further, the continued education and a mindset that is focused on the success of the church is illustrated as a key factor in continuing the values of the church.<sup>81</sup>

---

<sup>79</sup> Bilezikian, "Church Leadership," 33.

<sup>80</sup> Veronica Abney, "21st Century Church Leadership and Pastor Preparation" (EdD Colloquium, Olivet Nazarene University, 2018).

<sup>81</sup> Abney, "21st Century Church Leadership," 35.

An additional factor that is important to church leadership is the follower's perceptions and expectations of the leader. Researchers examined expectations of followers by exploring a singular case study in an Evangelical Church leadership in Jordan.<sup>82</sup> Authors Abujaber et al. noted that previous explorations have not considered how follower expectations impact church leaders' behavior. However, this is a factor that is frequently considered in non-religious leadership explorations. As such, the authors explored mature character and motivation within the case study of ten members that were actively involved in leadership within the church case study. Interviews were conducted with each of the participants and the results were thematically analyzed to reveal themes to address the research questions. In conclusion, the authors found that there were some issues of conflict between expectations and leader actions that appears to impact the efficacy of leadership. These were primarily centered around cultural values and the cultural environment of the church that the followers expected. Notably, assessments regarding cultural importance in church leadership is emphasized by researchers reviewed in the following sections. The authors additionally noted that themes of leader values, control attempts, cultural pressure, biblical convictions, and biblical references were the most emergent themes from interviewing the church leaders. Abujaber et al.<sup>83</sup> argued that future explorations should consider the intersection between follower expectations, leader activities and the cultural values that may further conflict and decrease effective leadership. Notably, ineffective leadership is connected with decreased following, which may be an element that can be correlated with the recent decrease in church membership.

---

<sup>82</sup> Emil Abujaber, Maurice A. Buford, James A. Wood Jr, and Bruce E. Winston, "The Impact of Followers' Expectations on Leaders' Behavior: A Case Study of Evangelical Church Leadership in Jordan," *International Leadership Journal* 11, no. 3 (2019).

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 37.

In sum, previous assessments regarding church leadership is focused towards understanding the ideal leadership models within the church. Examinations by Song<sup>84</sup> illustrated that leadership is most frequently positively impacted by servant leadership models that place the leader in a position to serve the membership. Similarly, Lall et al.<sup>85</sup> noted that servant leadership also serves as a model for increasing membership connectedness with the church and with the pastor. However, in these examinations how positive leadership models, such as servant leadership, serve to impact church membership is not frequently covered in connection with leadership styles. Following, church engagement is examined to explore variables that are related to the membership decline in the United States.

### **Declining Church Membership**

Membership within the church is variably related to engagement, which are connected to two primary themes in academic literature: (1) conviction, and (2) culture. These two will be discussed in following sub-sections. First, church membership will be considered in this section to provide context towards understanding the phenomenon of declining membership. In the United States, churches are increasingly closing their doors. Reportedly, 4,000 to 7,000 closed their doors due to decreasing membership and lack of adequate funds.<sup>86</sup> Rainer, in examining church decline, noted that: “As I looked at the deaths of 14 churches, I saw a common pattern. Obedience to the great commission faded; it usually faded gradually. It is not like one day the church was sending out dozens of members in the community and it suddenly stopped. Instead,

---

<sup>84</sup> Song, “Face Management and Servant-Leadership,”11.

<sup>85</sup> Lall et al., “Effects of Nationalization on Leadership,”12.

<sup>86</sup> William, Wright. “Wright Way: Religious Attendance Down- Why?” Editorial, Cleveland Daily. (2016).

the decline in the outward focus was gradual, almost imperceptibly gradual.”<sup>87</sup> In this, the gradual decline is demonstrated.

Church membership first originated in academic literature due to declining numbers in the late-1990s.<sup>88</sup> Stolzenberg, Blair-Loy, and Waite first examined how life-cycles of death and life impact membership within the church. In this assessment, data was assessed from National Longitudinal Study of the High School Class of 1972. The authors noted that family formation, divorce, cohabitation, and age are key factors that influence membership within the church. In particular, families with traditional family structures (e.g., father, mother, and child) living in the same household are most likely to continue participation within the church.<sup>89</sup> However, it should be noted that due to the dated nature of this study, these criteria may have changed as cultural and social factors have evolved in the past decade.

More recent examinations reveal that training within the church system may also impact church membership. Scherer<sup>90</sup> noted that church membership has rapidly declined in the past decade. Many churches are also noted to depart from traditional lecture styles for the purpose of increasing engagement. As such, the authors examined Central Baptist Church in Kentucky was examined to assess how current methodologies effected engagement and membership. In this church, the total membership was 1,017 and 712 members and 296 non-resident members. The usual attendance is 200 despite these total membership rates. For the authors study, five goals

---

<sup>87</sup> Thom S. Rainer, *Surprising Insights from the Unchurches and Proven Ways to Reach Them* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 2001), 42.

<sup>88</sup> Stolzenberg, Ross M., Mary Blair-Loy, and Linda J. Waite. "Religious Participation in Early Adulthood: Age and family life cycle effects on church membership." *American Sociological Review* (1995): 84-103.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>90</sup> Steven Scherer, "Training Members at Central Baptist Church in Paris, Kentucky, with a Biblical Understanding and Practice of Church Membership" (DMin diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018).

were enacted to ensure that the membership would be more active. This included assessing the current membership status, establishing a 6-week sermon on biblical memberships, increasing biblical church membership by the sermon series, developing a 4-hour curriculum membership class, and increasing new and existing church membership. Scherer argued that there is a need to examine the proper procedures for ensuring that membership is increased; however, the results of the goals for increasing membership was not provided in the assessment. However, the work of Scherer does provide useful information for understanding the decline of church membership and for establishing goals that may aid in the improving church membership.<sup>91</sup>

Similarly, assessments regarding improving church membership are focused towards models for furthering engagement of parishioners. Cornette<sup>92</sup> examined declining church membership through assessing the First Baptist Church of Venice in Florida. For this purpose, the author interviewed members of ten churches across three denominations. The author noted that in the case of the First Baptist Church that membership has doubled from 300 to 700 due to their efforts. As such, the authors presented the tactics that were used to increase church membership.

As noted, two variables arise in literature regarding church membership. Conviction is considered one element that is connected to church membership. Conviction is considered the commitment and belief in God and attending church as a means of practicing faith.<sup>93</sup> Research connecting conviction and church membership from a peer-reviewed stand-point is limited in

---

<sup>91</sup> Scherer, "Training Members."

<sup>92</sup> Christopher Cornette, "Five Practical Steps for Increasing Church Membership: A Case Study of First Baptist Church of Venice, Florida" (DMin diss., Liberty University, 2017).

<sup>93</sup> David P. Gushee, *Still Christian: Following Jesus Out of American Evangelicalism* (Louisville, KY: Presbyterian Publishing Corp, 2017).

academic literature. However, a few authors shed light on the role of conviction and church membership. Cornette<sup>94</sup> as previously noted examined the declining church membership through a series of First Baptist churches in Kentucky. In the interviews with church members, participants remarked that conviction was a critical reason for their continued commitment to the church and related services. Indicating that for members, conviction may play a critical role in regularly attending church meetings. However, research is limited in regard to conviction and church membership. Further, possible connections between conviction and church leadership are absent in research. However, assessments concerning church culture are more frequently discussed in academic explorations.

Church culture is critical to Christian church membership. The cultural environment of the church can foster current membership relationships, retain new members, and create a welcoming environment for curious individuals.<sup>95</sup> Galliard and Davis explored the phenomenon of decreasing church membership in the United States through gathering data from 233 participants that were applied the Organizational Assimilation Index. Subsequently, the surveys were examined to assess possible markers that indicated the likelihood of church membership dedication. Resultantly, the authors found three key markers: (1) relationships that were built with the church members, (2) continued involvement in church activities, and (3) learning church culture through immersion within the environment and through spiritual experiences. Participants reported that feeling accepted within the culture was a key consideration for their continued participation within the church. Thus, indicating that the cultural environment created within the

---

<sup>94</sup> Cornette, "Five Practical Steps for Increasing Church Membership."

<sup>95</sup> Bernadette Marie Galliard, and Courtney Wong Davis, "To Be Known, Accepted, and Involved: Investigating Organizational Assimilation in Christian Churches," *Southern Communication Journal* 82, no. 3 (2017): 117-128.



church is one factor that contributes to church membership. However, how the role of leadership plays in shaping the culture of the church was not addressed.

Church member identity also plays a crucial role in accepting and creating a welcoming environment within the church. Barrett<sup>96</sup> examined the role of cultural and social interactions within the church in a Japanese sample in Canada. The author<sup>97</sup> examined the construction of the membership through the churches; focus on grassroots based development that included some elements of traditional Japanese culture and language within the services. The author performed a critical discourse analysis to examine the texts and the interview transcriptions for assessing how cultural impacted and maintained church membership. Barrett reported that the role of Japanese culture within the church structure was reported as a welcoming and comforting element for participants. Further, new members were attracted to the church due to the familiar cultural environment. The work of Barrett<sup>98</sup> mirrors the findings of Galliard and Davis<sup>99</sup> through demonstrating the role that cultural environment plays within maintaining church membership. However, the connecting between leadership and the development of the church culture for increasing church membership is absent in academic assessments.

In sum, declining church membership continues to drastically impact churches in the United States. Church membership appears to be shifting differently for each church. Some churches report increases in membership, while others report a drastic decrease. Yet, the reasons

---

<sup>96</sup> Tyler Barrett, "Language Policy in Japanese Ethnic Churches in Canada and the Legitimization of Church Member Identities," *Language Policy* 16, no. 4 (2017): 433-460.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 27

for these changes are unclear in academic literature.<sup>100</sup> Researchers such as Stolzenberg et al.<sup>101</sup> first identified possible socio-demographic characteristics that play a role in membership maintenance. However, more recent examinations are focused on strategies, such as bible-based courses, can lead to increased membership levels. Yet, these examinations are not focused towards the impact of leadership upon church membership.

### **Leadership and Church Membership**

Leadership in the church is significantly examined in academic literature. However, connections to leadership and church membership are less thoroughly examined. In this section, previous assessments that consider the role of leadership will be examined to provide context to the importance of leadership within the church.

Leadership and church membership are documented to be interconnected to the maintenance and growth of church membership. Wilson<sup>102</sup> provided the first examination of leadership impact upon growth. The author employed the leadership practices inventory to examine specific leadership practices. After examining the scale, church membership was assessed for differences in attendance every 6-months based upon leadership practices. The author reported, that leadership styles impact the church attendance. Specifically, the leadership tactics that incorporated a welcoming environment was most likely to increase attendance and maintain current members within the church. The work of Wilson was foundational to establishing a link between leadership and church membership; however, an examination of how church leadership activities and shepherding contribute to church growth was not examined.

---

<sup>100</sup> Jeffrey M. Jones, "US Church Membership Down Sharply in Past Two Decades," *Gallup*, (2019), para. 1.

<sup>101</sup> Stolzenberg, Blair-Loy, and Waite, "Religious Participation," 16.

<sup>102</sup> Wilson, "Clergy Leadership Styles."

Elements of culture and conviction, as noted previously, are found to be impactful upon church membership attendance. Ellis<sup>103</sup> examined the connection between leadership, conviction, and culture with church membership. The authors round that leadership is one element that furthers church membership. However, the factors of conviction and culture, play an intersection role in creating church growth. Ellis<sup>104</sup> further argued that many churches lack the three Cs: conviction, culture, and constructs. Instead, modern churches are focused towards keeping services running without considering how to further the spiritual connection created during workshop services. Indicating that the roles of culture and conviction are factors that work in tandem with leadership for the furtherment of church membership.

Church growth is also connected with the ethical practices that leaders' practice. Mutia<sup>105</sup> explored strategic leadership styles in connection with a church based in Kenya. For the study, the author desired to examine how leadership was integral to social ministry, how church culture influenced church membership, and how ethical and effective leadership models influenced the growth of the church in Kenya. For the purpose of this assessment, a descriptive correlation assessment was conducted to examine 126 bishops and 4,914 clergy members. A structured questionnaire was used for collecting data. Subsequently, ANOVA, chi-square and analysis of variance was used for examining the reported responses from the questionnaire. Mutia<sup>106</sup> reported that strategic direction was correlated with church growth. Secondly, a relationship existed between the human capital development and the growth of the social ministry. Lastly, effective church culture was a predictor of numerical growth in church membership, which

---

<sup>103</sup> Ellis, "Designed To Lead," 99-101.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Mutia, "Strategic Leadership," 31.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

indicated that sustaining a church culture and combined effective membership were two critical factors that led to the continued membership growth in Kenya. The work of Mutia is foundational as it establishes a statistical link between leadership and the membership growth of the church. However, in this assessment, there is a lack of consideration for how leadership activities impact church decline. Further, a quantitative assessment is useful, but does limit the exploration of the lived experiences of the participants to gain a more robust understanding of how leadership specifically furthered growth in the Kenyan church.

In terms of leadership and membership examinations, a quantitative approach is common in academic literature. Jones<sup>107</sup> performed an assessment that mirrored the work of Mutia and provided information that linked leadership work with church growth in an Anglican church. Jones noted that there was a need to examine church growth through exploring leadership characteristics. As such, a case study approach was performed to assess a Northern diocese that had decreasing church membership. Data collection was conducted through a blind-questionnaire and interviews. Through this mixed-methods approach, the effectiveness of the leadership for church growth was assessed. Jones reported that perceived growth was based upon leadership characteristics. However, leadership alone was not enough. Instead, when congregational activities were included, church membership increased. Indicating that leadership must include activities that further human capital and create lasting relationships between leaders and members for increasing church growth.<sup>108</sup>

Transformational leadership is also illustrated as one method for increasing church growth. Brooks<sup>109</sup> performed an assessment of church growth in connection to leadership within

---

<sup>107</sup> Jones, "The Links Between Leadership Qualities," 35.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Brooks, "The Relationship between Transformational Leadership," 35.

a church in Tennessee. For the study, the author noted that transformational leadership qualities may be key to church membership. In particular, previous assessments linked transformational leadership to reduction of turnover; however, this had yet to be examined in terms of church leadership. As such, the author performed an assessment of five transformational leadership subscales from the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire. These subscales were used as predictors for examining the link between transformational leadership and church growth. Each scale was applied to 189 rural and urban pastors. Demographic and church membership data was gathered from the district offices of each of the churches. After data collection, descriptive statistical and multiple regression analyses were used to examine links between leadership styles and church membership. Resultantly, the author reported that there was not a relationship between transformation leadership and church growth. Brooks concluded that leadership alone may not be linked to church growth. However, in considering the findings of Brooks with Jones<sup>110</sup> and Mutia,<sup>111</sup> the results further indicate that leadership strategies alone are not sufficient. Instead, leadership activities and elements of culture and conviction may play a more significant role in church membership. Again, the quantitative approach is useful for examining correlation, but this does not allow for an exploration of qualitative factors, such as activities, culture, and conviction as linked with church leadership.

Leadership factors are also illustrated to be foundational to church membership growth.<sup>112</sup> Jordan examined leadership factors that contributed to church growth in a series of churches in North Carolina. The author used a grounded theory research approach to assess thirty

---

<sup>110</sup> Jones, "The Links Between Leadership Qualities," 35.

<sup>111</sup> Mutia, "Strategic Leadership," 33.

<sup>112</sup> Jordan, "Leadership Factors."

churches and assess membership growth based upon leadership factors. For the data collection, eighteen interviews were conducted with pastors of churches in North Carolina. Afterwards, thematic analysis was used as a means of examining resultant data. Jordan reported that in each of the churches, leadership traits that supported the continued growth of the church, through activities and involvement, were essential to membership increase. The work of Jordan illustrates that leadership factors are connected with church membership, but these must involve activities that serve to further the growth of the church through development of human capital.

A similar qualitative assessment to Jordan, conducted by Kieta,<sup>113</sup> illustrated the need for examining leadership through a theoretical framework approach. The author examined leadership formation as a tool for increasing church growth. For this purpose, two theories were used to frame the exploration: (1) full-range leadership theory, and (2) servant leadership theory. In this framework, the inclusion of full-range theory is unique as many theological assessments rely solely on servant leadership assessment. Further, the author employed a qualitative approach via interviewing forty church members and conducting a content analysis of church documents. Subsequently, thematic analysis was employed to assess emergent themes from the interviews and textual analysis. Twelve themes were revealed which included: ideal church leadership styles, church leadership management, church leadership motivation, the continued focus on church membership growth, the practices of the leaders, the perceptions of leadership by the congregation, the vision and mission statements, and the roles of the leadership within the church. Keita concluded that a central element of church growth was a combination of factors that involved the inclusion of young members to create innovative strategies, the involvement of

---

<sup>113</sup> Keita, "Leadership Styles."

technology for training and recruitment, and the activities that leaders used to further membership growth. Kieta work is foundational as it provides a qualitative assessment that illustrates the need for examination of leadership activities and involvement of church congregation to further growth. Also, Kieta emphasized a need for further examinations regarding how leadership activities increase membership, which is connected to the purpose of this study.

To conclude this section, the role of leadership to further membership growth has proven to be key to the growth. Notably, leadership alone is not connected to church membership growth. Instead, a variety of factors influence church membership when guided by leadership. These include innovative strategies, forms of leadership, church culture, conviction, and the strategies that are used to increase membership. Researchers reviewed in this section provided both qualitative and quantitative assessments that elucidated the need for further studies that examine how leadership activities serve to increase membership growth. However, there is a notable gap in the combination of leadership activities and shepherding as a viable model for increasing membership growth. As such, the following section presents an examination of shepherding and the role that it plays within the church and through the guidance of the church leader. Shepherding is presented within the following examination of the theological underpinnings as the basis for this concept is founded in the pastoral ministry established by Lord Jesus.

### **Theoretical Foundation**

The theoretical basis for this exploration is the shepherding ideology for pastoral ministry. The first instance of shepherding is noted in John: 21:5, as Peter speaks to Lord Jesus. As Lord Jesus left, Peter was instructed to “feed my lambs” (John 21:15); “take care of my

sheep” McArthur points out regarding shepherding as “a humble and loving service.”<sup>114</sup> The status as a shepherd involves caring for the flock, which is the congregation. As noted by McArthur, shepherds are often without social status. As such, the pastoral shepherd places themselves at the feet of God, Lord Jesus, and in service of the congregation.<sup>115</sup> Notably, shepherding is often referred to as pastoral care throughout academic literature. At a foundational basis, pastoral care is based in the ideology of theological shepherding as established in the Bible.<sup>116</sup> However, pastoral care is also explored as a model of patient care for non-religious explorations. The delineation between terms of pastoral care and shepherding will be clarified as they are used throughout this section.

As a theoretical foundation, there are several works that provide critical information for this basis. First, is the examination of Barry G. Lawson’s work,<sup>117</sup> *Lay Shepherding: Developing a Pastoral Care Ministry for the Small to Mid-sized Church* and Dr. Melvin Steinbron’s work *Lay Pastoral Care Services*.<sup>118</sup> These assessments guided the development of the theoretical foundation for this study and served as critical references due to their foundational nature. The biblical underpinning of shepherding is presented in the following section. However, the application of shepherding as a theoretical foundation is presented first in this section.

An example of the impact of pastoral care was provided by researchers examining South Asian practices for improved social care.<sup>119</sup> In an assessment by Muraleedharan, Byker and

---

<sup>114</sup> John MacArthur, *Pastoral Ministry: How to Shepherd Biblically* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2017), 46.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Lawson, “*Lay Shepherding*.”

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>119</sup> Ashwathi Muraleedharan, Erik Jon Byker, and Matthew A. Witenstein, "Pastoral Care Teaching: A Case Story Vignette." In *Teaching and Teacher Education*, Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, 2019, pp. 339-344.



Witenstein, pastoral care practice was examined from the viewpoint of a single south Asian practitioner. In this narrative, the practitioner described how she adapted the pastoral care model for providing social work care to those in need in South Asia. In the assessment, the authors<sup>120</sup> noted that pastoral care foundation, which is based in shepherding, can be a prominent method for providing care to those in need through providing care, comfort, and training. In this examination, the efforts discussed were not within pastoral care, but serve to illustrate how the model is effective throughout academic research.<sup>121</sup> However, in terms of pastoral care, shepherding is a prominent topic.

In terms of the incorporation of shepherding through theology, Miller-McElmore<sup>122</sup> provided a seminal assessment. The author argued that pastoral care was critical to caring for the congregation and for navigating the challenging socio-cultural events that impacted church members. Miller-McElmore stated that:

The methods of pastoral theology demonstrate the value of a "thick description" as a fundamental beginning point for all the fields of theological study. Standing explicitly between academy, church and society, those in pastoral theology know intimately the limits of academic exercises, and they know the limits of knowledge apart from context. On both scores, pastoral theology is challenging theology and theological education to reconsider their foundations.<sup>123</sup>

In this statement, the author emphasizes the non-religious underpinning of pastoral care, which serve to provide furthered academic examinations for application of the model. Further, pastoral care in theology now includes a model for furthering congregational care.<sup>124</sup> Though

---

<sup>120</sup> Muraleedharan, Byker, and Witenstein, "Pastoral Care Teaching," 50.

<sup>121</sup> David Savage, *Non-Religious Pastoral Care: A Practical Guide* (Global: Routledge Publishing, 2018).

<sup>122</sup> Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, "The Human Web: Reflections on the State of Pastoral Theology," *The Christian Century*, (1993): 53.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

dated, the reflections of Miller-McElmore served to increase theological and non-religious explorations of pastoral care in academic literature. Resultantly, a dearth of literature is available considering pastoral care.

The caring model can be fully defined in theological terms by exploring the work of Clarke,<sup>125</sup> who considered pastoral caring as a model of shepherding throughout the church. Clarke remarked that the early disciples were guided towards leadership through “being tasked as overseers in regard to the church after the fashion of a shepherd for his sheep.” Similarly, Rummage provided model explorations for pastoral care and shepherding in his exploration of churches in the United States. Rummage<sup>126</sup> defined shepherding as the role of caring for the congregation and providing activities, such as sermons and congregational meetings to further the care provided to the church members. The work of Rummage<sup>127</sup> was crucial in providing modern assessments that considered pastoral care through the theological definition of shepherding.

Following, Janet Ramsey publication, *First Do No Harm: Pastoral Care Informed by Job*<sup>128</sup> expanded further on the models that would be employed through a shepherding ideology. In this model, the pastor is charged with the critical role of caring for the congregation. This includes those within the membership of the church, but also those in need who do not attend the church. Ramsey’s work is critical as it establishes roles for leaders to follow, which included offering services through kindness as directed by the examples in the book of Job. In the same

---

<sup>125</sup> Clarke, *A Pauline Theology*.

<sup>126</sup> Rummage, “A Model for Pastoral Care,” 57.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Ramsey, “First Do No Harm.”

vein of models for shepherding, Hughes<sup>129</sup> presentation of the C.A.R.E model provided a model for pastoral care that was focused on compassion and worship of the Word of God. These models, and those offered by Munson<sup>130</sup> discussed in chapter one, are critical examples of the use of shepherding for the purpose of leading the congregation.

Despite significant assessments of shepherding and related examinations of pastoral care, there is an absence of examinations that use this theoretical foundation for the purpose of assessing leadership and church membership decline. As such, this study will expand upon previous literature by using the shepherding model for the purpose of examining church leadership and efforts to decrease membership decline. Following, the theological underpinnings that serve as the basis for this study are presented.

### **Theological Underpinning**

The theological underpinning of Christian leadership is surrounded by examinations that assess the role of the leader and the shared duty as a follower of God.<sup>131</sup> Ambition is also considered crucial to leading congregation but should be strenuously guided by working towards the Word of God. Peter, in Timothy 3:1 stated that “To aspire to leadership is an honorable ambition.”<sup>132</sup> However, the tension between ambition and seeking greatness is established in, Jeremiah 45:5: “Should you then seek great things for yourself? Seek them not.” In Peter and Jeremiah, we see thin line that a parishioner leader should follow. Guiding those towards the work of God is a noble act, however, this should not be in the aim of achieving greatness for

---

<sup>129</sup> Hughes, “Shepherding the Flock.”

<sup>130</sup> Munson, “Models of Christian Counseling.”

<sup>131</sup> Petry, Roger Auguste, "Shepherding Sustainable Development: Possible Lessons on Leadership from Judaism and the Early Christian Church." In *Sustainability and the Humanities*, pp. 561-573. Springer, Cham, 2019.

<sup>132</sup> *The Revised English Bible* (Oxford, England: Oxford Press, 1997).

oneself. First, the theological underpinnings that consider the value of church membership is presented.

## **Church Membership**

The foundation for church membership is based within the teachings of Christ. The scriptural basis is found in Christ's commandments to ensure that his followers will teach and follow his commandments. In Mark 4, Jesus commanded: "Do you not understand this parable, how will you understand all the parables?"<sup>133</sup> In this, Jesus commands that his findings are instructed and taught through communal meetings. These served as the basis for the church gathering. Church gathering is a spiritual gathering that allows Christian worshipers to connect through their beliefs and further understand the values that Jesus desired to instill in His followers. This can be seen first in Matthew 16:18:

And I tell you,  
you are Peter,  
and on this rock I will build my church,  
and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

The communal nature of the church is further exemplified in Ephesians 2:19-22:

So, then you are no longer strangers and aliens,  
But you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,  
Built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets,  
Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone,  
In whom the whole structure  
Being joined together,  
Grows into a holy temple in the Lord.  
In Him you are also being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

In this statement, the church is conceptualized as a spiritual construction that is dependent upon the church membership and the continued worship towards the will of God and Lord Jesus. The church is considered as the intersection between God, Lord Jesus, and the congregation.

---

<sup>133</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are from the *English Standard Version, ESV* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008).

Through the church and associated members, the Word of God is spread. Further, ideal values, morals, and comfort for those in need is provided. The church, though constrained by physical walls, is also considered a spiritual embodiment of the Word of God through the shared community of the congregation.<sup>134</sup> Allison<sup>135</sup> provided a foundational understanding of this through examining the establishment of the church. Allison<sup>136</sup> noted that the church is necessary due to being:

Part and parcel of (1) the eternal purpose of God in redeeming his fallen human creatures; (2) the Father's mighty work in regard to the exaltation of his humiliated and crucified son; (3) the eternal divine counsel with regard to the revelation of himself and his ways; and (4) prophetic scripture that assigns an important role to the church in the outworking of salvation.

In this sentiment, we see that the church serves as an entity that encompasses the pastor and the congregation. Through services and activities, the Word of God is continually spread throughout members, newcomers, and praise is provided to God and Lord Jesus. Central to the church is the leader who guides the congregation through sermon and activities. Following, an examination of the biblical underpinning of the pastor as a shepherd is presented.

## **Shepherding**

Shepherding is one factor that contributes to church membership growth through leadership guidance. In an assessment of church growth, Pederson emphasized the role of shepherding in guiding the followers of Christ.<sup>137</sup> Shepherding refers to the role of the church leaders as a shepherd for the congregation. As a shepherd, the pastor leads the congregation in

---

<sup>134</sup> Petry, "Shepherding Sustainable Development," 42.

<sup>135</sup> Allison, Gregg, R., *Sojourners and Strangers: The Doctrine of the Church* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), 59.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 47, 59.

<sup>137</sup> Pedersen, *Making Time for Growth*.

the direction of God's will. Further, he serves as a caretaker of the congregation and provides services such as congregational activities, that will create a spiritual bond.

Rummage<sup>138</sup> provides an examination of shepherding that is critical to the understanding of growing church membership. The author examined a growing church in Maryland that originated with 60 members and now has 1,100 members as of 2014. A survey was employed to examine the pastoral care methodology, which is founded within shepherding to examine the models used for church growth. Rummage concluded that pastors should aim to serve not as clergy but as caregivers through the shepherding model. Key theological underpinnings are also provided in the authors examination that are critical to this literature review. First, in John 10:11 Jesus referred to himself as "Good Shepherd." Later, the authors of Hebrews (13:20) continued to refer to Jesus as "Great Shepherd." Later, this model is illustrated as Jesus gathered his disciples in spreading the Word of God to the people of the earth. Caring in this aspect is not simply a title, but instead an ideology that should encompass a leader's entire persona. As a shepherd, caring for people is critical to development and spreading the Word of God. Similarly, Oates noted that pastoral care can be most simply defined as "The Christian pastor's combined fortification and confrontation of persons as persons in times of both emergency crisis and developmental crisis."<sup>139</sup> This illustrates that the shepherding pastor is needed in all times and not just in a point of central crises. According to Oates, in these models, the pastor serves as a shepherd during significant events, such as baptism and death, but also in caring for the congregation during times of significant crises.

---

<sup>138</sup> Rummage, *A Model for Pastoral Care*.

<sup>139</sup> Wayne E. Oates, *New Dimensions in Pastoral Care* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1970), 3.

Southard<sup>140</sup> further mirrored the works of Oates and Rummage<sup>141</sup> through emphasizing the balance needed between caring and discipline. Oates argued that: “The new solution is to provide breadth and depth of care through the involvement of a wide range of caring persons in gradation of tasks for which they are trained and motivated.”<sup>142</sup> In this model, the pastor serves as shepherd to care for his congregation, but also to further their ability to care for each other and spread the word of God. Thus, the role of a leader that follows God is not only to preach and to oversee the congregation, but to train and instill values through congregational activities.<sup>143</sup>

Southard’s work, though dated due to its publication in 1975, was a novel idea in theological assessments. However, more recent work illustrates the evolution of the shepherding ideology within Christian literature. Steinbron<sup>144</sup> noted that, based on Southard’s assessments, the pastor serves to be more than simply a leader that carries our religious rites, but trains his followers to provide care and comfort through the teachings of Lord Jesus. Towns<sup>145</sup> and Steinbron<sup>146</sup> argued that these pastoral ideas of care were born of rural churches. In rural regions, the congregation served a spiritual basis, but also as a point-of care for comfort, training, and communal activities that developed the bond between neighbors. Today, in a globalized and increasingly populated world, such ideologies are more difficult to connect. However, through shepherding, the pastor can establish a caring and communal congregation that may lead to increased and retained membership.

---

<sup>140</sup> Samuel Southard, *Comprehensive Pastoral Care* (King of Prussia, PA: Judson Press, 1975), 6.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>142</sup> Oates, *New Dimensions*, 47.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Melvin J. Steinbron, *The Lay Driven Church* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1997).

<sup>145</sup> Elmer L. Towns, “The Small Personal Sunday School,” *Christian Life* (1971).

<sup>146</sup> Steinbron, *The Lay Driven Church*, 50.

In terms of biblical underpinnings of shepherding, there are multiple lines of evidence that illustrate the importance of the ideology. First, God is among the first to consider Himself a shepherd to the Nation of Israel (Ezekiel 34:30-31). God further repeats this sentiment to humans that served as shepherd to their populations.<sup>147</sup> In these examples it is evident that shepherding is not just the role of God and Lord Jesus, but also upon followers to care for each-other through enacting the will of God. A critical example of this is found in reference to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in Psalm 78:70-72:

He chose his servant David,  
Calling him from the sheep pens.  
He took David from tending the ewes and the lambs  
And made him the shepherd of Jacob's descendants.  
God's own people, Israel.  
He cared for them with a true heart  
And led them with skillful hands.

In this Psalm, we see God as the Shepherd, but also as guiding His followers to care for each other through the shepherding model.<sup>148</sup> Similarly, in Peter 5:1-3 Lord Jesus commands His disciples to follow the path of the shepherd:

So, I exhort the elders among you,  
as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ,  
as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed:  
shepherd the flock of God that is among you,  
exercising oversight,  
not under compulsion,  
but willingly,  
as God would have you;  
not for shameful gain, but eagerly;  
not domineering over those in your charge,  
but being examples to the flock.

---

<sup>147</sup> Genesis 4:2; Jeremiah 6:3; Jeremiah 9:19.

<sup>148</sup> Steinbron, *The Lay Driven Church*, 50.



In this remark, Lord Jesus' words direct His followers to lead, not for personal gain, but for caring for the congregation that would serve in the honor of their God. This is a sentiment that God embarked upon His people first in Jeremiah 32:1-2:

Then I will gather the remnant of my flock  
out of all the countries where I have driven them  
and I will bring them back to their fold  
and they shall be fruitful and multiple  
I will set shepherds over them  
who will care for them,  
and they shall fear no more  
nor be dismayed  
neither shall any be missing  
declares the Lord.

Thus, in this framework, we see the importance of shepherding as God and Lord Jesus directed it. Further, it serves as is illustrated by previous academic explorations<sup>149 150</sup> as a model for strategic leadership that authentically serves the congregation, the people, and foremost God. Next, a conclusion of this chapter is presented.

### **Chapter Conclusion**

As noted, the purpose of this study is to address leadership as an activity within the church for the means of growing membership. Unique from previous assessments, focus will be applied regarding leadership activities and shepherding for church growth. Throughout this literature review, relevant assessments to the purpose of this study was considered. Further, notable gaps were elucidated regarding leadership activities and shepherding as strategic models for increasing church membership.

---

<sup>149</sup> Oates, *New Dimensions*, 48.

<sup>150</sup> Steinbron, *The Lay Driven Church*, 50.

In this chapter, leadership was briefly introduced. Researchers indicated that leadership is a complex process that involves unique characteristics and strategies to garner ideal support.<sup>151</sup> However, traditional examinations of leadership are focused on business, reducing turnover, and increasing followers in non-church related assessments.

Following, leadership in the church was explored to understand the conceptualization of leadership as a means of growing church membership. Through this, researchers noted that the aim of leading the church is based on servitude to God, Lord Jesus, and to the congregation.<sup>152</sup> Previous assessments were focused towards qualitative assessments of leadership through cultural values,<sup>153</sup> explorations target towards the intersection of nationalism and church growth,<sup>154</sup> and assessments of leadership styles, such as servant leadership.<sup>155</sup> Academic explorations provided emphasis on the critical nature of the leader of the church, however, the intersection of shepherding and leadership activities was noted to be missing from these foundational assessments.

Next, declining church membership was explored to provide context on the understanding of how to assess this phenomenon. In these assessments, conviction and culture were primary themes that were linked towards membership growth. Researchers indicated initially socio-cultural factors that played a key role in decline, such as family structure.<sup>156</sup> Other assessments considered quantitative examinations of decline and provided goals that could be

---

<sup>151</sup> Silva, "What is Leadership?," 1.

<sup>152</sup> Sanders, *Spiritual leadership*.

<sup>153</sup> Petry, "Shepherding Sustainable Development," pp. 561-573.

<sup>154</sup> Song, "Face Management and Servant-Leadership."

<sup>155</sup> Lall et al., "Effects of Nationalization on Leadership," 1599-1612.

<sup>156</sup> Robertson, "A Theological Perspective," 3.

<sup>157</sup> Stolzenberg, Blair-Loy, and Waite, "Religious Participation in Early Adulthood," 84-103.

used for increasing church membership.<sup>158</sup> However, researchers such as Cornette noted that leadership efforts desire further consideration in academic assessments to examine membership growth and decline.<sup>159</sup>

Following, leadership and church membership were considered. In these assessments, a quantitative approach was most commonly used for examining the impact of leadership on church growth.<sup>160</sup> Researchers identified that leadership practices are connected to growth, but notably leadership alone was not sufficient for increasing growth. Strategic efforts and leadership qualities were only noted to be effective if combined with efforts to increase human capital of the church, growth membership through leadership activities, and foster a warm cultural environment within the church.<sup>161 162 163</sup> Similarly, qualitative assessments indicated that leadership must be further backed by assessing the culture of the church, including activities that foster growth. However, as in previous assessments, the inclusion of shepherding and leadership activities was not a focus of these past examinations. As such, this study serves to fill a gap in the previous literature through examining leadership activities and shepherding for continued membership growth.

### **Chapter 3**

---

<sup>158</sup> Scherer, "Training Members at Central Baptist Church."

<sup>159</sup> Cornette, "Five Practical Steps for Increasing Church Membership."

<sup>160</sup> Wilson, "Clergy Leadership Styles."

<sup>161</sup> Mutia, "Strategic Leadership."

<sup>162</sup> Jones, "The Links Between Leadership Qualities."

<sup>163</sup> Brooks, "The Relationship between Transformational Leadership."

## Research Methodology

In the United States, church membership is falling rapidly.<sup>164</sup> The decreased church membership represents a concern for the church continued message of engaging fellowship. Literature illustrates that shepherding and leadership are two key models for ensuring continued church engagement.<sup>165</sup> However, a gap in current literature remains regarding how leadership and shepherding activities can support the purpose of continued church fellowship. As such, this chapter presents the research design, the problem statement, purpose statement, and the participants that will serve to guide the exploration of shepherding and leadership in the church. Ideally the findings from this study will guide leadership models and shepherding practices to further church membership growth and serve as a foundation for churches who are lacking membership or experiencing a decline. First, a synopsis of the research design is presented.

### Research Design Synopsis

In this study, the case study was appropriate as it allowed for assessing participants experiences along with the previous methodologies used, such as leadership and shepherding, to increase church membership and engagement. An overview of the research design is presented in Table 1. As such, a case study design will be employed at Mountain View Church through semi-structured interviews, observations, and gathering secondary church data to review church leaders activities and the processes involved in increasing leadership and engaging the church. A thematic approach will be used to analyze data. Triangulation through all three data sources will occur to represent a cohesive examination of the Mountain View Church. Next, the problem

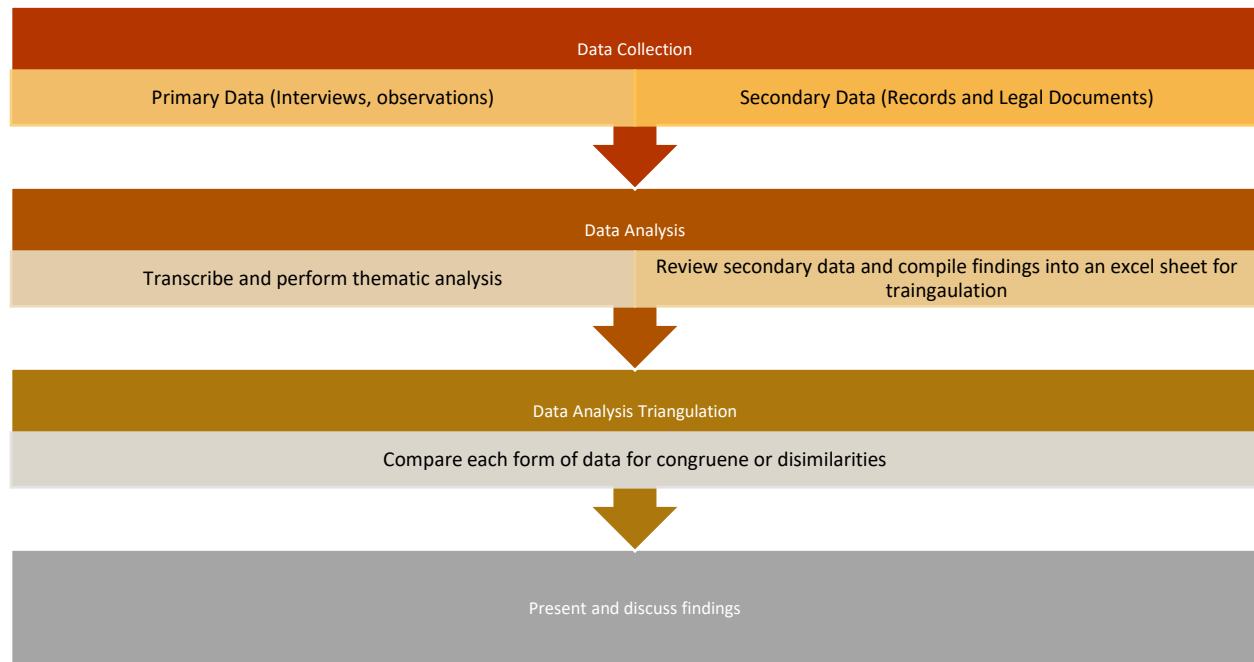
---

<sup>164</sup> Jones, "US Church Membership," para. 1.

<sup>165</sup> Yang, *Making A Healthy Church*.

statement is presented as a basis for the following assessments of the procedures for data collection and analysis.

Table 3.1. *Overview of Research Design*



## The Problem

The problem that this project will address is the role of leadership as an activity that improves church membership and how church leadership and shepherding encourage church growth. The activities of leadership characterize church growth in the context of encouraging fellowship and followership.<sup>166</sup> Leadership strategies critical for ensuring that the membership of the congregation is engaged and attends service.<sup>167</sup> Yet, without growth as an objective of church administration, the role of shepherding decreases and the services fail to reach needed ears of the

<sup>166</sup> Page Jr., *Interpreting the Ancient Archaic Text*.

<sup>167</sup> Jones, "The links between leadership qualities."

congregation.<sup>168</sup> Shepherding is crucial, as it was passed from the Old Testament<sup>169</sup> (e.g., John 10:11) and remains a responsibility of the clergy to spread the Word and provide an example. Further, shepherding and leadership are models placed by Christ and are integral to the maintained of church vitality.<sup>170</sup> As such, the problem regarding poor church membership is critical to address. Next, the purpose statement for this study is presented.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative case study research is to understand how leaders improve church membership and how leadership and shepherding encourage church growth. Based on the findings of previous research, church membership decline is a trend that continues to grow in general; however, there are some churches that are growing. The objective of the research is to explore a case where church membership has increased, to understand how membership increased in light of leadership and shepherding practices of church leaders. The benefit of this research is the possible improvement of church membership. Next, the research design and methodology are presented.

### **Research Design and Methodology**

In this study a qualitative methodology with a case study approach is chosen. A qualitative methodology includes exploring a phenomenon through the lens of observable and interview based lived experiences.<sup>171</sup> In qualitative research, statistical examinations are not desired as the phenomenon is based on lived, non-quantifiable experiences. Conversely, a

---

<sup>168</sup> Stone and Erickson, "Hometown Community Church," 129-136.

<sup>169</sup> Pedersen, *Making Time for Growth*.

<sup>170</sup> Powell, et al., sl. 2.

<sup>171</sup> Sarah J. Tracy, *Qualitative Research Methods: Collecting Evidence, Crafting Analysis, Communicating Impact* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2019).

quantitative approach employs statistics to assess testable answers.<sup>172</sup> As such, a qualitative methodology was appropriate for this study exploration of church membership, leadership models, and shepherding activities to increase church engagement. Further, a qualitative methodology supported previous literature that employed similar designs for exploring church membership engagement. In assessing an appropriate qualitative design, phenomenological, case-study, and ethnographic options were available. In a phenomenally assessment, the perspectives of lived experiences are used to build meaning from participant responses.<sup>173</sup> This approach was not ideal as the basis for this study was exploring leadership, shepherding activities, and assessing data specific to a church. Next, ethnographic observation was considered, which involves observing and documenting cultural aspects and behaviors.<sup>174</sup> However, as the purpose of this study was not to explore these variables of culture or behavior, an ethnographic observation design was not chosen. Next, a case-study was considered which is designed to explore a specific phenomenon from the perspectives and secondary data (e.g., church documents in this case) in a specific organization.<sup>175</sup> Following, the setting for this study is presented.

## Setting

This study will occur at the Mountain View Church in California. The setting is

---

<sup>172</sup> Tracy, *Qualitative Research Methods*, 162.

<sup>173</sup> Ronald Pekala, and Cathrine F. Wenger, "Retrospective phenomenological assessment: Mapping consciousness in reference to specific stimulus conditions," *The Journal of Mind and Behavior* (1983): 247-274.

<sup>174</sup> Christena Nippert-Eng, *Watching Closely: A Guide to Ethnographic Observation* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2015).

<sup>175</sup> Robert E. Stake, "Qualitative Case Studies," (2005).

appropriate as the church has grown from 50 members in 2004 to 2,000 in 2010. Ultimately, this process has featured challenges and opportunities that offer a unique opportunity to assess models of shepherding and leadership for this study. Additionally, the church has made itself available for interviews, observations, and assessment of the secondary church documents. Following, information regarding the participants is provided.

## **Participants**

The participants for this study will include five church leaders and five congregation members. Additionally, data collection will occur through observation and secondary data analysis, which is discussed in data collection and instrumentation. Congregation members will be recruited through flyers posted at the church. Participants will reach out to the researcher to inquire about participation and will be informed that the study is approved by the IRB and is confidential and voluntary.

The participants for this study are appropriate as they provide knowledge regarding leadership and shepherding and represent unique knowledge of increasing engagement and church membership. Additionally, the five congregation members interviews may provide details regarding the efforts of the church to retain and engage new members, which is evident from the growth of the church. Next, the ethical considerations for this study are discussed.

## **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations are a critical background to any form of empirical research.<sup>176</sup> In this assessment, Institutional Review Board (IRB) permission was first granted before conducting any form of data collection or analysis. After this permission, the permission for the site was requested from the Mountain View Church (Appendix X). Ultimately, these two

---

<sup>176</sup> Stake, "Qualitative Case Studies."



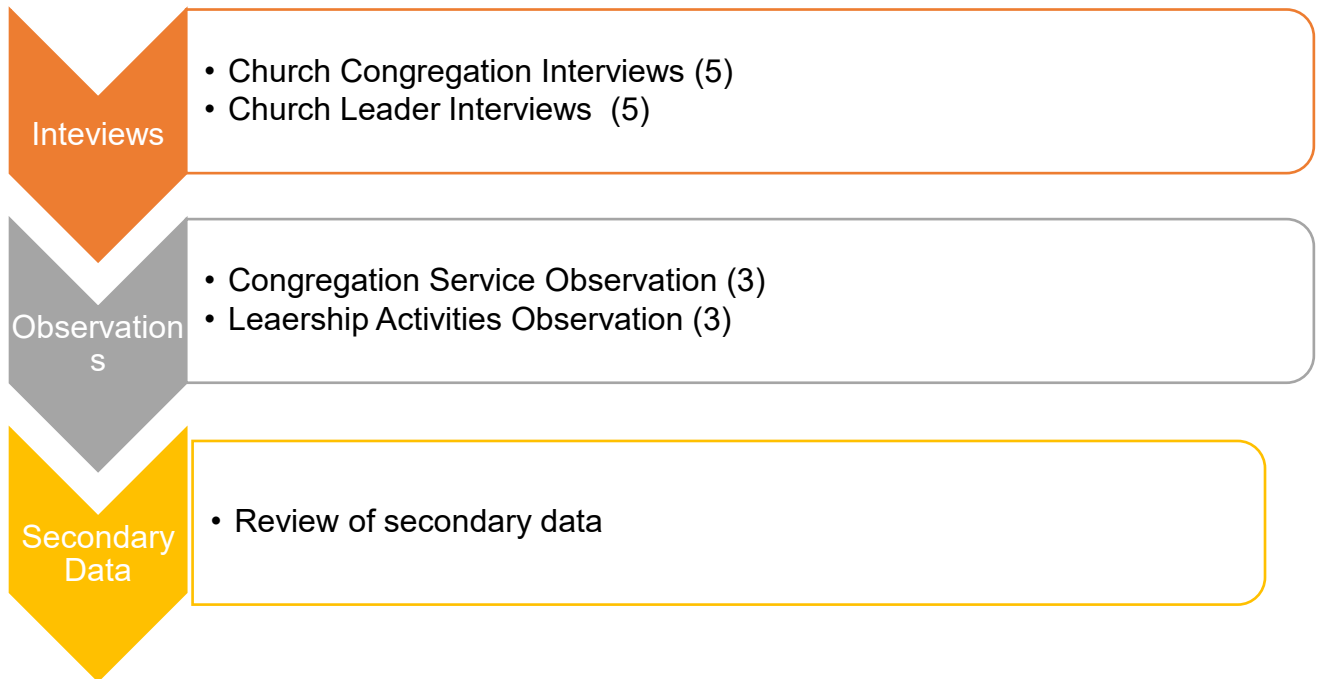
permissions served as the initiate for continued recruitment of congregation members and leadership, which occurred in collaboration with the church as detailed in the aforementioned section.

Additionally, all participants were required to sign informed consent forms prior to meeting attendance. The consent form included details assuring that the participant was aware that the study was voluntary and confidential. As an added measure, all data for this study is kept on a password encrypted USB drive that is kept in the researcher's private and locked office. Per IRB requirements, all data will be destroyed three years after final dissertation approval. Next, the data collection methods and instrumentation are described.

### **Data Collection Methods and Instruments**

Data collection for this study will occur in three separate segments: (1) interviews with church leaders and congregation, (2) observations during services, and (3) a review of church documents. Each of these are discussed in separate sub-sections below. A review of the data collection models is presented in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 *Data Collection Overview*



**Interviews.** For interviews, the instrumentation is an interview guide developed by the researcher. The interview guide is carefully aligned with the problem and purpose statement and was reviewed by three professional colleagues to assess for clarity. If any notes on clarity or alignment were noted, these changes were made before data collection. Afterwards, the author will conduct interviews with five congregation members and five church leaders using the interview guide. The interviews will last for approximately 60-90 minutes and will be audio-recorded. The interviews will be semi-structured which will include the opportunity for follow-up-questions. Additionally, the researcher will take detailed notes, as much as possible, during the interviews if thoughts or comments arise. Directly after the interviews, the researcher will transcribe the interviews. After transcription, the interviews will be returned to the members for member checking, which is the process of allowing the participant to read the transcripts to ensure clarity and ensure that errors are not present. Next, the following method of observation will occur.

**Observation.** Observation will also occur through the instrumentation of a data collection guide (Appendix X) developed by the researcher. The data collection guide will include information regarding the factors of administration and preparation that occurred and could be connected to engagement, leadership, and shepherdship. Also, three colleagues will review this data collection guide to ensure that errors are not present and that the guide will be easily usable during observation. Observation will occur during congregation. Afterwards, observation will occur for church leaders' activities to assess the role and methods used for leadership and shepherding. Thus, two sets of observation will be present (1) congregation observation, and (2) leadership observation. A series of three observations will be conducted for the congregation and for the leadership observations. Next, secondary data collection will occur.

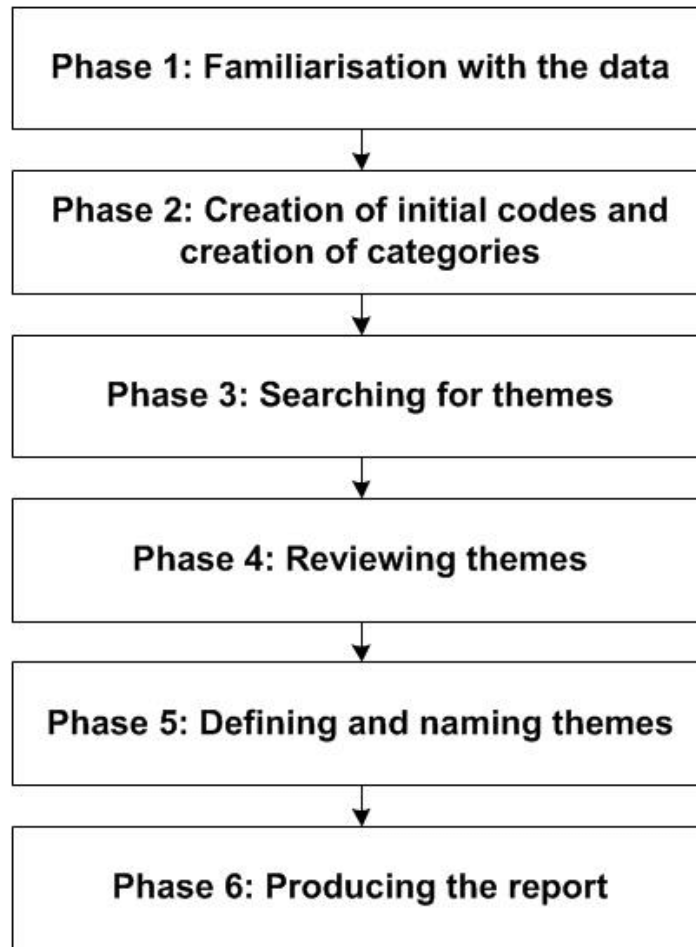
**Church record assessment.** The third source of data will consist of church records to assess methods employed for engagement and review elements of marketing and advertisement that may play a role in engagement. Following the format of the data analysis is presented.

## **Data Analysis**

Data analysis will occur through thematic assessments and triangulation of data (Table 2). First, thematic analysis will occur for the interviews conducted with the church congregation and the church leaders. For this process, Braun et al.<sup>177</sup> six-step model of thematic analysis will occur (Figure 1).

---

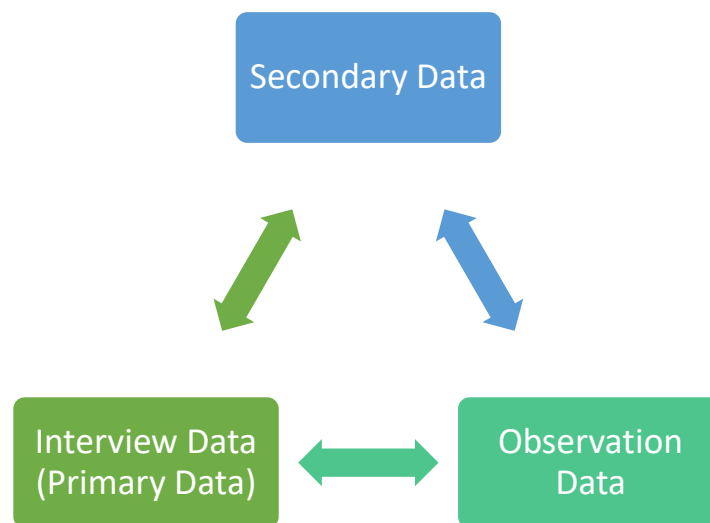
<sup>177</sup> V. Braun, V. Clarke, N. Hayfield, & G. Terry, (2019). "Thematic Analysis," *Handbook of Research Methods in Health Social Sciences*, 843-860.



*Figure 1.* Braun and Clarke Six-Step Model (Source: Braun et al., “Thematic Analysis,” p. 12).

For this process, first the author will read and re-read the interview transcripts. After this process, the organizational coding software NVivo will be used to guide the coding process. All of the coding and thematic analysis will be completed by the author, however, NVivo offers useful tools that aid in organization. For example, analogous words, sentences, and phrases can be marked as “nodes” which are indicators of similarities. In the next step, the similarities can be assessed for emergent themes. After initial themes are found, phase four, includes reviewing these themes to assure these are ideal and match the present interview data. Afterwards, the themes will be named and presented. Next, the model of observation and secondary data analysis will begin.

For observational analysis, the findings will be compiled and presented in a table format that can be used for presentation purposes. All data collected with the pre-created data collection sheets can be analyzed by the author to assess for similarities and themes. Next, the secondary data can be compared and triangulation with the interview and observation data. The model for triangulation is presented in figure 2. Triangulation will involve comparing the three forms of data for congruence or dissimilarities. Triangulation is key in case studies as it allows for comparison of data and improved validation of the ultimate findings.<sup>178</sup> After the process of triangulation is completed, the findings will be compiled and presented in chapter four and five. Next, elements of trustworthiness are provided.



*Figure 2. Triangulation of Three Sources of Data*

---

<sup>178</sup> Braun et al., "Thematic Analysis," 162.

## Trustworthiness

The elements of trustworthiness include credibility, transferability, and conformability, which are discussed in separate sub-sections.<sup>179</sup> Each of these are critical to ensuring the ethical conduct of the research study and the transferability to future researchers. First, transferability refers to the ability to generalize the results for future researchers. For this study, the findings will be specific to the Mountain View Church. However, the findings may also be applicable for other researchers wishing to duplicate this study and assess methods for engagement and ultimate increased church membership.

Next, conformability refers to the element of unbiased research.<sup>180</sup> For this process, the researcher will employ bracketing, which refers to the model of documenting elements of personal bias in a field journal during data collection and analysis. This reflexive model will allow for controlling researcher bias and as a tool for future reflection when examining the ultimate findings. Finally, credibility<sup>181</sup> refers to the ability of outside researchers to ensure that the data collection was ethical and standardized. For this study, member checking will ensue to ensure that participants can review their responses. Also, the researcher will use Braun and Clarke and additional models of standardized methods for case study thematic analysis to ensure that these methods could be repeated by future researchers. Finally, the summary of this chapter is presented.

## Summary

---

<sup>179</sup> Braun et al., "Thematic Analysis," 162.

<sup>180</sup> Sharan Merriam, and & Elizabeth Tisdell, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation* (Someret, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2015).

<sup>181</sup> Ibid., 175.

In this chapter, the research design and methods were presented for the purpose of transparently showing the models and design for data collection and analysis. In the following chapter, the results of this methodology and design are presented.

## Chapter 4

### Findings

The qualitative case study research goal was to understand how church leaders increase church membership and how leadership and shepherding encourage church growth. The research aim was to explore a case in which church membership has increasingly grown to understand how church 'leaders' leadership and shepherding practices contributed to growth. This chapter includes a description of the relevant demographic characteristics of the study participants. Next, this chapter proceeds with descriptions of the data collected and of the implementation of the data analysis procedure. This chapter continues with a presentation of the findings from the data analysis. The findings are organized by theme. A summary concludes this chapter.

### Demographics

The thirty-three participants in this study were members or pastors in churches in the Western United States that grew their membership over the three to five years immediately preceding this study. Questionnaire data was collected from twenty-three church members. Interview data was collected from ten pastors. Table 4.1 indicates the relevant demographic characteristics of the participants.

Table 4.1. *Participant Demographics*

Participant	Gender	Age	Race/ethnicity	Duration of participation in case church
Church member participants				
C1	Male	52	Black	4
C2	Male	45	Caucasian	6
C3	Female	55	Black	7
C4	Male	56	Caucasian	3
C5	Male	46	Caucasian	4
C6	Male	35	Hispanic	7



C7	Female	50	Black	10
C8	Male	45	Caucasian	6
C9	Male	33	Hispanic	5
C10	Male	37	Asian	5
C11	Male	44	Caucasian	12
C12	Female	51	Black	15
C13	Male	53	Caucasian	10
C14	Male	40	Hispanic	6
C15	Male	45	Caucasian	4
C16	Female	39	Asian	6
C17	Male	42	Black	8
C18	Male	45	Hispanic	5
C19	Female	40	Black	18
C20	Male	56	Caucasian	8
C21	Male	48	Hispanic	7
C22	Male	59	Black	20
C23	Female	53	Caucasian	9
Pastor participants				
P1	Male	56	Black	15
P2	Male	45	Caucasian	12
P3	Male	54	Black	18
P4	Male	46	Caucasian	8
P5	Male	45	Hispanic	5
P6	Male	53	Caucasian	10
P7	Female	40	Hispanic	7
P8	Male	40	Black	8
P9	Female	53	Caucasian	9
P10	Male	50	Black	20

### Collected Data

Data was collected from three sources in this qualitative case study to facilitate data triangulation. The first data source was a questionnaire administered to congregation members. A

total of twenty-five congregation members provided data. The second data source consisted of one-to-one interviews with ten pastors. The average duration of the interviews was seventy-five minutes, and the interviews were audio-recorded using a handheld, digital recording device. The questionnaire and interview responses were analyzed to identify themes relevant to addressing the study purpose. The third data source consisted of publicly available church documents, including vision and mission statements, from public-facing church websites. A total of twenty-two documents from the websites of churches represented by the questionnaire and interview participants were reviewed. The documents were analyzed for the specific purpose of better understanding church priorities at the institutional level, the core ministry and service areas, and the expansions and improvement that were occurring during membership growth.

### **Data Analysis**

Responses from the twenty-three questionnaires were compiled in a Microsoft Word document. Data from interviews with ten participants were transcribed verbatim from the recordings into one Word document per participant. The twenty-two church documents were compiled into a table in Word by selecting the text on the church website, choosing the copy option from the right-click menu in the web browser, and pasting the text into the table in Word to ensure verbatim reproduction of the original text. The data was then imported into NVivo 12 software and analyzed using the inductive, six-step procedure described in Braun et al..

The first step of the analysis involved fully reading and rereading the data to gain familiarity. In the second step, data from the three sources were coded. Excerpts from the data that were relevant to the study purpose were assigned to NVivo nodes. Different excerpts that expressed similar meanings were assigned to the same node. Each node represented a code. All

data sources were coded under the same nodes to facilitate data triangulation through the identification of common themes and discrepancies across the three sources.

To facilitate data triangulation, NVivo software enabled the researcher to view the data from the three sources both together and separately. Data from different sources coded under the same node could be separated for comparison using NVivo's matrix coding query feature, with the codes and themes as row headers and the three data sources as column headers. The resulting matrix indicated how many excerpts from each type of data were included in each code and theme. A total of 101 relevant data excerpts were grouped into thirteen codes. Table 4.2 indicates the codes that emerged during this step and the data sources that contributed to them, as indicated by NVivo's matrix coding feature.

Table 4.2. *Data Analysis Codes by Data Source*

Code (alphabetized)	<i>n</i> of excerpts from data source assigned to code			Total
	Member questionnaires	Pastor interviews	Church documents	
Building a sense of community		2		2
Clear and applicable instruction	1	2	1	4
Creative outreach through church social events	4	3		7
Developing lay leadership	13	3		16
Extending welcome to all		2	6	8
Faithfulness to doctrine	3	4	6	13
Individual attention	3	2		5
In-person outreach	2			2
Offering unconditional acceptance		1	16	17
Phone or email follow-ups	3			3
Sharing ministry information during service	4	1		5
Training and use of support and outreach groups	10	2		12

Worship and prayer meetings	6	1	7
-----------------------------	---	---	---

---

*Note.* An empty cell indicates a value of 0.

In the third step of the analysis, the data were themed. Theming involved grouping similar codes to form a smaller number of larger themes that represented overarching patterns of meaning in the data. The thirteen codes were grouped into four overarching themes during this step. The fourth step of the analysis involved reviewing and refining the themes by comparing them to the original data, to ensure they accurately represented patterns in the participant responses and church documents. In the fifth step, the themes were named and defined. The sixth step of the analysis involved creating the presentation of findings provided in the remainder of this chapter. Table 4.3 indicates the themes that emerged during data analysis and the codes grouped to form them.

Table 4.3. *Grouping of Codes to Form Themes*

Theme Code grouped to form theme (alphabetized)	<i>n</i> of excerpts from data source assigned to theme			Total
	Member questionnaires	Pastor interviews	Church documents	
<b>Theme 1. Potential members are engaged through special events and individual attention</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>31</b>
Creative outreach through church social events				
Individual attention				
In-person outreach				
Phone or email follow-ups				
Sharing ministry information during service				
Worship and prayer meetings				
<b>Theme 2. Lay leadership is developed to increase ‘members’ engagement in outreach</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>30</b>
Building a sense of community				

Developing lay leadership				
Training and use of support and outreach groups				
<b>Theme 3. Church culture is presented as unconditionally welcoming and accepting</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>25</b>
Extending welcome to all				
Offering unconditional acceptance				
<b>Theme 4. Church teachings are characterized as clear, applicable, and faithful to the Bible</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>17</b>
Clear and applicable instruction				
Faithfulness to doctrine				

---

## Findings

This presentation of the study findings is organized by theme. The four major themes that emerged to indicate how church leaders increase church membership and how leadership and shepherding encourage church growth were: (1) Potential members are engaged through special events and individual attention; (2) Lay leadership is developed to increase ‘members’ engagement in outreach; (3) Church culture is presented as unconditionally welcoming and accepting, and (4) Church teachings are characterized as clear, applicable, and faithful to the Bible. The themes are discussed with examples from the data in the following subsections.

### **Theme 1: Potential Members Are Engaged Through Special Events and Individual Attention**

This theme was identified in the questionnaire and individual interview data. Members and pastors indicated that their churches engaged in creative outreach events to attract potential members in their responses. When potential members participated in an outreach event and

provided contact information, a lay leader or pastor would follow up with individual communication by phone or email to promote interest in the church.

Participants described a variety of church social events conducted to attract and engage potential new members. Some events were conducted at the church, and others were executed in public spaces. P1 indicated that current members are encouraged to invite acquaintances to attend church functions. Special events were conducted in the church so that members who were extending those invitations could offer a definite target date for attendance, instead of an invitation to visit the church at an indefinite future time: “We said, ‘Let’s have specific Sundays where there’s a little bit of nuance that will give that friend or neighbor or colleague a specific reason to come this time.’” P1 stated that the events allowed members to give more definition to their invitations: “That [member] can and will say to their friends or neighbors, ‘Hey, why don’t you come this Sunday, because we’re doing this and that,’ instead of, ‘Come with me sometime.’”

P6 described an outreach event conducted at a mall that engaged a large number of community members and resulted in new members joining the church: “We did a big community outreach at the mall. Our goal was just to gather at least 500 people by providing fun games inside the mall. We converted it into a mini carnival. We had different games all around the area, and then we gave away candy . . . we ended up having long lines of people coming into our stage. I think we had about 1,200 people show up. That was the most significant community outreach that we did. And as a result, some of those people came back, attended the church.”

P8 described a forum provided at the church where potential new members could receive additional orientation and information to sustain their engagement: “After the service, we have a

blue tent, we call the Starting Point. At the end of the service, we pointed out our Starting Point area, where [first-timers] will be encouraged to hear more about the church.”

In questionnaire responses, church members described a variety of outreach events to attract new members. One member reported that the church conducted a men’s Saturday morning breakfast group focus meeting with new members, while another member similarly referred to a Saturday morning breakfast group focus meeting with new members. A third member described, “monthly outings for newcomers following Sunday services.” A fourth member responded that the church-sponsored “monthly movie and pizza night out by lay leader teams.” To convey the benefits of membership in the church to persons attending a service for the first time, the service would include, “live testimony for the congregation and staff members during altar call,” a fifth member reported.

Individual attention for first-time attendees could be offered after the service or through follow-up communication, participants stated. P1 stated that individual attention was paid to newcomers during the meet and greet time that was part of every service, when: “We stop on purpose . . . our home-group leaders and deacons make sure that they are looking around for people that are maybe isolated or sitting by themselves. We count that time as really important.”

Questionnaire respondents also reported that individual attention was provided to newcomers. After a service, pastors and lay leaders would engage in “talking with newcomers and sharing the material of all the services the church provides,” one member stated. Follow-ups with newcomers included, “Group leaders’ follow-up phone calls after new members,” one member said. A second member reported, “Pastor calls over the phone after new membership enrollment.” In contrast, a third member stated that newcomers were sent a “personal email from group leaders’ follow-up teams.” Follow-ups could also be conducted in person, another member

indicated, saying that newcomers received, “A follow-up with a gift bag within 72 hours from a care group leader.”

## **Theme 2: Lay Leadership Is Developed to Increase Members’ Engagement in Outreach**

This theme was identified in the questionnaire and individual interview data. Members and pastors indicated in their responses that lay leaders were developed in their church through dedicated training. Trained lay leaders assumed limited responsibility for administrative functions in the church, ministries, and outreach, to attract new members. Participants indicated that lay leaders were highly effective in engaging new members because they were highly engaged with the church.

P3 said of engaging members in leadership activities, “The first thing I started to do was establish teams of lay leaders, and to enable them to make decisions, to have the vision, to be able to train, equip, and move forward.” P3 said of the importance of lay leaders to the mission and vision of the church, “These are the make-it-or-break-it people. This group, they’re the team leaders. They’re the ones that carry the weight of ministry.” P7 said of the relationship between developing lay leaders and growing the church, “The more we got people involved in leadership, the more I let go of leadership and the more people that just brought around. The more leaders you had, the more people they attracted, and it went from there.”

P4 reported that the task of attracting new members and growing the church was imperative for all current members: “Everybody’s role and mission is to lead someone into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ. If you’re not doing that, you’re not a part of the system.” P4 added expectations for members, “We expect everyone to promote groups. So, from children to senior adults, grow, everyone grows the groups.” P10 also reported that small groups of the kind P4 mentioned were critical to engaging members in leadership and in bringing in new



members: “Number one, [church growth occurs] because of the small groups that we have active in the church, where we tell our people to connect the guests who have connections with people in the church.”

Member participants also cited lay leadership development when asked about the most effective changes to increase church growth. Questionnaire responses to this effect, each of which was provided by a different member, included “added coaching of lay leaders,” and “involved more laypeople by training them in specific areas of pastoral care.” A third member stated that the most effective change for promoting church growth was, “more use of laypersons in the day-to-day organization of church duties,” while a fourth member responded, “trained and made the most of laypeople.” A fifth member stated that the most effective change was “lay personnel doing more pastoral care than pastors.” Lay leaders were developed through “leadership development training and skill-strengthening,” another member stated.

### **Theme 3: Church Culture is Presented as Unconditionally Welcoming and Accepting**

This theme was identified in the individual interview and church document data. Interview participants and church documents indicated that church culture was presented to potential members as centered around core values of openness and acceptance. The church was open to all. Efforts were also made to reach out to vulnerable populations who were at risk of exclusion from other community organizations.

Material from a church website described the organization as “a community of faith that is Christ-centered and welcomes people of all faiths and no faith,” extending the invitation to attend services even to individuals who did not share the beliefs taught in the church. Unconditional acceptance was described on the same church website as modeled on the indiscriminating nature of divine love: “God’s unconditional love, grace, and mercy, which

transforms our lives, leads us to love, accept and serve others in Jesus' name." The unconditional nature of love and acceptance was further emphasized in the same document in words: "People are invited to 'come as you are' to meet the God who loves all of us unconditionally!"

Another church webpage emphasized the offer of welcome to individuals who might fear exclusion as a result of perceived personal failings: "We are a church where it's OK not to be OK. We remain committed to the mission of helping people find and follow Jesus." Another invitation on a church webpage described the church as "a place where Everyone's Welcome because one of the things we've learned is that Nobody's Perfect, and with God, we believe that Anything's Possible. No matter where you've been or what you believe, you're welcome here." One invitation from a church webpage emphasized the offer of unconditional acceptance: "As a family, we love God, we love one another, and we have plenty of room left in our hearts to love you!" For interested persons who might fear exclusion on the basis of membership in a marginalized group, a church webpage stated: "What the world labels diversity is exactly what we think heaven will be like. People of every color, nation, and language are welcome, and we are enriched by their presence and unity as we worship the God who made us all."

In describing the appeal of the church culture to newcomers, P5 emphasized welcome and acceptance: "I believe the attraction here is this group of people has found the church to be a loving church and accepting church, and a comfortable church, and a safe church to be in." P9 described the church's ministry as focused on outreach to individuals who were at risk of exclusion and isolation: "Probably our main, core ministry are people that are in drug and alcohol recovery." The ministry's lay leader worked closely with a drug and alcohol recovery program in the community, P9 reported. Participation in and completion of the multiyear program was court-mandated for persons convicted of substance-related felonies as a condition

of having the felony expunged from their record. P9 said of the ministry leader's outreach to participants in the program, "She goes there, connects with people, and so we have support-group meetings here." Of the benefit the church offered to recovering substance abusers, P9 stated, "A lot of the people we deal with, they're pretty much down on their luck, and they've destroyed their lives; they get Christ in their life, and they begin to piece everything back together again."

#### **Theme 4: Church Teachings Are Characterized as Clear, Applicable, and Faithful to the Bible**

This theme was identified in the individual interview, questionnaire, and church document data. Data associated with this theme indicated that in addition to a message of unconditional welcome and acceptance, church messaging to attract newcomers and promote growth emphasized a combination of fidelity to biblical precepts and clear, engaging sermons with teachings that members could immediately apply in their lives.

The text on one church webpage emphasized the alignment of the letter and spirit of Christian doctrine with potential members' practical self-improvement goals: "Join us as we explore the life-giving message of the Bible and the Good News of Jesus Christ. We believe that God's Word brings life change and is beneficial in every area of your life." The text on another webpage targeted the offer of applicable and faith-centered teachings more specifically toward individuals who perceived themselves as needing help and guidance: "We believe that this revelation of God's Son, Jesus Christ, is the only hope for lost and broken people. Therefore, we strive to make Jesus the center of all our ministry." Another invitation to newcomers emphasized the engaging and applicable nature of the Bible-centered sermons:

“Preaching conjures up a lot of different images in people’s minds these days. Boring. Dry. Irrelevant. Maybe you haven’t heard real Bible preaching! Preaching is simply a passionate and dynamic communication of an important and vital truth from the Bible. The preaching you hear will, first of all, be Bible-centered. We still believe in the absolute truth of the time-tested Word of God. Be sure to bring your Bible because you will need it. Second, it will be relevant and clear. You won’t wonder what the point was, and you will be able to use it immediately.”

Other church documents emphasized church teachings of fidelity to the Bible and the church’s function as an accessible and engaging source of biblical instruction. Text from a church mission statement centered adherence to the biblical doctrine in the church’s two highest priorities, which were, respectively, “To practice the church life in the manner prescribed in the New Testament,” and, “To edify and perfect Christian believers with teachings of the scriptures.” A church vision statement also emphasized adherence to biblical teachings: “We’re committed to building a strong community, passionate in our worship of the Lord, and fully reliant on God’s Word.” Another church document included a message for potential new members that emphasized the church and its teachings as a link between the values expressed in the Bible and members’ everyday lives: “Join us as we explore the life-giving message of the Bible and the Good News of Jesus Christ. We believe that God’s Word brings life change and is beneficial in every area of your life.”

Individual interview participants also described the alignment of church and biblical teachings as an engine of membership growth. P7 stated that membership grew in part because “we refused to compromise our convictions with the church.” Effective communication of biblical teachings was also a necessary condition of membership growth; P1 indicated: “One thing that has led to our growth is careful attention that has been placed on an enthusiastic and

well-informed communication style . . . that's a big deal for why people come and why people stay." P1 said that communication style was centered on delivering biblical messages by asking questions such as, "Are they [members] enjoying it? Can they connect with what's being said?"

In questionnaire responses, members cited adherence to and focus on the Bible as a key benefit for church members. One member stated that the church was beneficial to members because it was a "Bible-based church focused on God's word." Eighteen out of 23 questionnaire respondents described Bible Studies as among the most active groups in the church. Eighteen participants also described Bible Studies as one of the groups conducted by lay leaders, suggesting that two practices for increasing membership (development of lay leaders and alignment of church and biblical teachings) dovetailed in Bible Studies groups.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this qualitative case study research was to understand how church leaders increase church membership and how leadership and shepherding encourages church growth. This research aimed to explore a case in which church membership has increased, to understand how church leaders' leadership and shepherding practices contributed to growth. Four major themes emerged during the inductive analysis of the questionnaire, individual interviews, and document data to address the study purpose.

Theme 1: Potential members are engaged through special events and individual attention. This theme was identified in the questionnaire and individual interview data. Members and pastors indicated in their responses that their churches engaged in creative outreach events to attract potential members. When potential members participated in an outreach event and provided contact information, a lay leader or pastor would follow up with an individual communication by phone or email to promote interest in the church.

Theme 2: Lay leadership is developed to increase members' engagement in outreach. This theme was identified in the questionnaire and individual interview data. Members and pastors indicated in their responses that lay leaders were developed in their church through dedicated training. Trained lay leaders assumed limited responsibility for administrative functions in the church, ministries, and outreach to attract new members. Participants indicated that lay leaders were highly effective in engaging new members because they were highly engaged with the church.

Theme 3: Church culture is presented as unconditionally welcoming and accepting. This theme was identified in the individual interview and church document data. Interview participants and church documents indicated that church culture was presented to potential members as centered around core values of openness and acceptance. The church was open to all. Efforts were also made to reach out to vulnerable populations who were at risk of exclusion from other community organizations.

Theme 4: Church teachings are characterized as clear, applicable, and faithful to the Bible. This theme was identified in the individual interview, questionnaire, and church document data. Data associated with this theme indicated that in addition to a message of unconditional welcome and acceptance, church messaging to attract newcomers and promote growth emphasized a combination of fidelity to biblical precepts and clear, engaging sermons with teachings that members could immediately apply in their lives. Chapter 5 includes discussion and recommendations based on these findings.

## Chapter 5

### Conclusion

The decline of church membership and attendance is a crisis among the ministry within the United States. There has been a ,profound decline of attendance between the 1990s and late 2010's. Membership fell from 70% in 1998 to 50% of US citizens within 20 years, creating a nine-point reduction in the number of church attendees<sup>182</sup>. However, there is a discrepancy within these statistics. Some churches maintain the ability to enhance their numbers even as the average number of US citizens attending church continues to decline.<sup>183</sup>

Previous research has examined how church growth depends upon leadership and the ability to bring in new parishioners by engaging activities that grow the church's population.<sup>184</sup> The importance of church leadership cannot be understated. Church leadership aides in the vitality and health of the church while maintaining a relationship with members. These congregants depend upon the church's leadership to be strong shepherds who rely upon caregiving practices.<sup>185</sup> Previous research has found that leadership practices significantly influence church attendance.<sup>186</sup> In a study by Alice, the author stated that while leadership is an important influence in church attendance, it remains a more complex subject due to conviction and culture issues.

---

<sup>182</sup> Jones, "US Church Membership," *Gallup*, para. 1.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid., para. 3.

<sup>184</sup> Yang, "*Making A Healthy Church*."

<sup>185</sup> Powell et al., "Models of Church Vitality."

<sup>186</sup> Wilson, "Clergy Leadership Styles."

Therefore, a relationship can be made between leadership and church growth, after that leadership needs to create a strategic focus on social elements of the church, such as culture. In the study by Mutia, which focused on the relationship between leadership and church growth, the results indicated that when church strategies are focused on human development, capital development, personal transformation, and leadership, church growth occurs.<sup>187</sup> This research was supported by Jones, who found that when a church utilizes formal functions, leadership becomes more important.<sup>188</sup> Transformational leadership should also be an important part of the ministry, as there is a statistically significant relationship between church growth and transformational leadership.<sup>189</sup>

It is important to investigate leadership and its relationship to church growth. Qualitative research can help provide insight into this relationship. Previous qualitative research has attempted to use a grounded theory approach to explore the relationship between church growth and leadership. The results indicated a strong relationship between leadership and strategy when trying to grow a church's population.<sup>190</sup> Keita utilized two theoretical frameworks, the full-range leadership theory and servant leadership theory, expanded upon the idea that they could both be used as measures in qualitative research.<sup>191</sup>

The problem that this project addressed was the role of leadership as an activity that improves church membership and how church leadership and shepherding encourage church growth. The thesis for this study was that the shepherding and leadership that members of a

---

<sup>187</sup> Mutia, "Strategic Leadership."

<sup>188</sup> Jones, "The Links between Leadership."

<sup>189</sup> Brooks, "The Relationship Between Transformational Leadership."

<sup>190</sup> Jordan, "Leadership Factors."

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.



congregation experience have an impact on their engagement in the church and their motivation to involve other people in the community in the church as well, which in turn supports church growth.

The purpose of this qualitative case study research is to understand how leaders improve church membership and how leadership and shepherding encourage church growth. Based on the findings of previous research, church membership decline is a trend that continues to grow in general; however, there are some churches that are growing. The objective of the research is to explore a case where church membership has increased, to understand how membership increased in light of leadership and shepherding practices of church leaders. The benefit of this research is the possible improvement of church membership.

This study took place in Mountain View Church. The study relied upon semi-structured interviews, observations, and pertinent documents as subprime sources of data. The observation took place when the church was in session and not in service. While the church was in session, observations included an examination of the congregation and church leadership. When the church was not in session, church leadership was also examined to understand variables such as administration and preparation for church services. Semi-structured interviews were selected as they were able to understand both the thoughts and feelings of church leadership and its congregation. Semi-structured interviews occurred among members of the congregation after the service took place. The focus of the interviews was to understand the perceptions of church growth and leadership. The pertinent documents focus on organization, marketing, and advertising.

A qualitative case study was appropriate for this research because it could uniquely understand the subject of church growth and leadership. A quantitative method was rejected as

the research did not measure the growth of the church. From a theoretical standpoint, it is important to understand what influenced the participants in church attendance and growth. The research design for the study was a case study method. The study was a single case study in the Mountain View Church, after that rapid church growth had been shrinking. Ethnographic research was rejected as it required a level of immersion that was not feasible. A phenomenological design was rejected as it would not be appropriate for this research due to the focus of experience and consciousness.

The results of the study uncovered four themes. The first theme was that potential members are engaged through special events and individual attention. The results indicated that when churches create creative outreach events, there is greater enthusiasm to attend the church, especially when a leader or pastor would follow up with individual communication by phone or email. Theme two was that leadership helps increase member engagement and outreach. The congregation and pastors both stated that lay leaders should be trained for their church and be utilized for administrative functions, ministries, and outreach to attract new members. The third theme was that church culture should be presented as unconditionally welcoming and accepting. Participants noted that church culture should be presented to potential members around the core values of openness and acceptance, especially to vulnerable populations who are at risk of exclusion from other community organizations. The final theme was that church teachings must be clear, applicable, and faithful to the Bible. This theme focused that with the message of unconditional welcome and acceptance, there must be an emphasis on fidelity to biblical precepts and clear and engaging sermons where members can identify with the teachings of their own minds.

## Interpretation of the Findings

**Theme 1.** The first theme was potential members are engaged through special events and individual attention. Participants stated that their church participated in creative outreach events to garner potential members. During one of these outreach events, contact information would be gathered from the potential members. A lay leader or pastor would reach out to the potential member to see if they express any interest in the church. There are multiple types of events that the church could utilize to attract members. Some of these events occurred at the church, while others occurred in public spaces. One participant noted that a good way to garner increased membership was for members to bring their own friends and family to church functions or special events.

The literature provided examples to support theme one. For instance, Barrett<sup>192</sup> focused on how cultural and social variables mix within the church. The author concentrated on grassroots based development within traditional Japanese culture and language. By reaching out to new members in a way that made them comfortable within their own culture, potential participants felt more likely to attend the church.

It is important to note that church growth also depends on the ethical practices of that church's leadership. Mutia<sup>193</sup> focused on strategic leadership styles in a church based in Kenya. The author examined how leadership was important to church culture and membership. The author found that strategic direction is directly related to church growth. The second uncovered significant relationship occurred between the increase of church goers and social ministry. Church culture was a strong predictor of increased membership. Both of these studies made it

---

<sup>192</sup> Barrett, "Language Policy," 433-460.

<sup>193</sup> Mutia, "Strategic Leadership."

clear that church culture should link with the appropriate demographic when conducting outreach. It is up to the leadership of the church to create outreach programs that mirror the geographic location and society of where the church is located.

**Theme 2.** The second theme was that leadership is developed to increase member engagement and outreach. This theme focused on how lay leaders utilized dedicated training to increase member outreach of the church. When a leader is trained, they have limited responsibility for administrative functions in the church and outreach programs for new members. As they are highly engaged in the church, lay leaders are often the perfect solution to increase church membership.

One participant noted that it was important to establish teams of lay leaders and allow them to make decisions to move the church's outreach engagement forward. An increased number of lay leaders increases the number of people brought into the ministry. Lay leadership development can create change within the church. Additional coaching of lay leaders and training in specific areas can help promote church growth.

The literature supports that training within the church system has a direct correlation with church membership. Scherer<sup>194</sup> asserted that church membership has declined within the past decade and that traditional lecture styles have been changed to increase participant growth and engagement. The author found five themes to ensure that leadership creates a more engaged environment. These five steps included focusing on the current membership status, creating a six-week sermon on biblical memberships, increasing biblical church membership by the sermon series, creating a four-hour membership class, and increasing new and existing church

---

<sup>194</sup> Scherer, "Training Members at Central Baptist Church."

membership. The author proposed that it is important to examine the proper procedures to increase membership.

In a separate study, Cornette<sup>195</sup> focused on declining church membership at the First Baptist Church of Venice in Florida. The author found that this church membership has doubled from 300 to 700 due to their engagement and outreach. The author found multiple tactics were used to increase church membership. One tactic is conviction. The conviction was when the commitment and belief in God relate to attending church to practice one's faith.

Although not specifically focusing on leadership, the literature did provide some degree of support that leadership is responsible for increased engagement. Much of the literature focused on the practices of the sermon to improve conviction and dedication rather than member engagement and outreach, especially among leaders. This indicates a need for future research regarding lay leaders, member engagement, and how it relates to sermons and conviction.

**Theme 3.** The third theme presented church culture as unconditionally welcoming and accepting. Participants noted that church culture for potential members should focus on the core values of openness and acceptance. No potential members should be discriminated against in the church, and it should be open to all, especially vulnerable populations who might not be accepted by other community organizations.

It is not just up to lay leaders and members of the church to create this culture. Documents such as a church website should create an atmosphere that the church is Christ centered and open to people of all faiths. The website should focus on God's love and not presented with terms of exclusion. Church webpages should not create an atmosphere of marginalization, instead it should focus on unconditional acceptance.

---

<sup>195</sup> Cornette, "Five Practical Steps for Increasing Church Membership."

Participants noted that it was important to emphasize and create an atmosphere of welcoming and acceptance. The church should spread love, acceptance, and comfort. Another participant noted that outreach should focus on those who might be excluded or isolated like vulnerable populations who are in drug and alcohol recovery. Therefore, lay leaders should work closely with rehab recovery programs within the community. Often times, these rehabilitation programs are court-mandated for substance-related felonies. Rehabilitation programs often offer help to clean their records. Outreach to participants in the program creates connections for support groups that can occur at the church. For those down on their luck, rehabilitation programs could offer the love of Christ as a ministry.

The literature supported that church culture was vital to create new membership, establish relationships, retain new members, and offer a warm environment for potential members.<sup>196</sup> In a study by Gailliard and Davis, the authors investigated decreasing church membership within the United States and found three key themes. The first theme was that relationships were built with the church members, the second theme was continued commitment and involvement in church activities, and the final theme was learning church culture through immersion, the environment, and spiritual experiences. This indicates that church culture is an important variable when creating a welcoming and accepting environment. Participants of the study felt that when they were acknowledged within the church, it was the church culture that kept them coming back. Therefore, church culture and the environment is an important component of growing a ministry.

There is a link between culture found between theme two and three according to the literature. In one study, the authors studied the relationship between leadership, conviction, and culture for church membership. It was uncovered that leadership furthers church membership

---

<sup>196</sup> Gailliard, and Davis, "To be Known, Accepted, and Involved, 117-128.

while conviction and culture have a crossing role in church growth.<sup>197</sup> Therefore, Ellis established the three C's of conviction, culture, and constructs. Yet, modern churches concentrate on maintaining their leadership without understanding how important the spiritual connection is between members and services. Thus, culture, conviction, and constructs should work within leadership to increase church membership. Mutia<sup>198</sup> also found that church culture was a forecaster of increased church growth. It is important to maintain a church culture as well as an ongoing outreach effort for effective membership and to increase parishioners.

**Theme 4.** The final theme was church teachings are characterized as clear, applicable, and faithful to the Bible. The theme gathered data from individual interviews, questionnaires, and church documents. These documents should focus on messages of welcoming and acceptance to attract newcomers, fidelity to biblical precepts, and engaging sermons that directly correlate to the members' lives.

On one church webpage, there was an emphasis on the alignment between the letter and spirit of the Christian doctrine related to self-improvement goals. On another webpage, there was stress upon potential members' self-improvement goals. Many websites focused on that teachings are applicable to those needing help. These websites try to leave behind the image that preaching was bland, dry, or irrelevant and instead focused on a Bible-centered approach that was relatable to potential members.

Other church documents focused on fidelity to the Bible and how the church is accessible and engaging during sermons. One church's statement focused on the adherence to Bible teachings while another church offered a message to potential new members that link the Bible's

---

<sup>197</sup> Ellis, "Designed To Lead," 99-101.

<sup>198</sup> Mutia, "Strategic Leadership."

teaching to everyday life. Participants noted that there should be an alignment of church and biblical teachings to growing membership. Biblical teachings should be effectively communicated as a necessary condition for membership growth. Many members cited adherence to the Bible as a clear benefit to church members. There was limited research within the literature review that focused on the Bible, leadership, and outreach; however, some authors noted that sociodemographic characteristics offer a significant role in membership. Strategies such as Bible-based courses have led to increased membership. However, this study was not focused on the influence of leadership upon church membership.<sup>199</sup>

The absence of existing literature on the Bible, leadership, and outreach creates a need for future research. An increased inspection of current literature could offer better insights to the phenomena. Additionally, the fourth theme seemed out of place in relationship to the other three. Further research can offer an explanation of this discrepancy.

### **Limitations**

There were numerous limitations to the study. The first limitation had to do with the research design. The use of self-reporting and semi-structured interviews may have resulted in incorrect, exaggerated, or false responses. Individuals may view their church more positively than in reality. This limitation could result in respondent bias, thereby creating inaccurate results. Another research design that affected limitations were observation as a data collection strategy. Observation is meant to compare church activity and leadership from interview data to mitigate bias. However, observations could still be biased, thus limiting the study. A separate limitation was time constraints. Church leadership was only available during certain times of the week, making interviews and observations time-dependent. By being time-dependent, it means that

---

<sup>199</sup> Mutia, "Strategic Leadership," 16.



there is a not a full immersion into the investigation, and leadership could be responding in a certain way due to these constraints.

This study also had a unique variable that limited the results. The study took place during COVID-19, the disease which has resulted in quarantining and social distancing large groups. During this time of COVID-19, individuals may feel reluctant to attend church, let alone join. Additionally, leaders are put in a position where growing the church puts potential participants' lives in danger. Leadership across multiple spectrums have yet to address COVID-19 adequately, especially in terms of religion fully. As leadership faced these challenges, the results of the study may be limited.

Another limitation was the case study method. By utilizing a case study method, this study was limited to one singular location. This church may place varying emphasis on lay leaders, biblical studies, and outreach when compared to churches in other locations. A multiple case study may have mitigated this limitation as it could incorporate various churches into the study. This church was also limited to a single location. By limiting into a singular location, the study was at the whims of that location's demographic population. Differing demographics may place varying emphasis on the importance of religion. These differences provide an avenue for future research.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

There are multiple opportunities for future research within the study. The first opportunity was methodological. This study utilized a qualitative methodology. The results depended upon the individual viewpoints of leadership in the church. These viewpoints are subjected to potential bias. Additionally, by utilizing the qualitative methodology, the study was unable to compare and contrast the success of leadership within the church or churches. By

utilizing a quantitative method, there is an opportunity for future research where church leadership and growth can be measured and compared. Another opportunity for future research was its research design. A case study only focused on one church, where leaders may have limited opinions. By utilizing the singular case study, the study was also subjected to specific demographics. The use of a multiple case study would have provided an opportunity to get increased views from varying leaders. A multiple case-study could widen how leadership increases church membership.

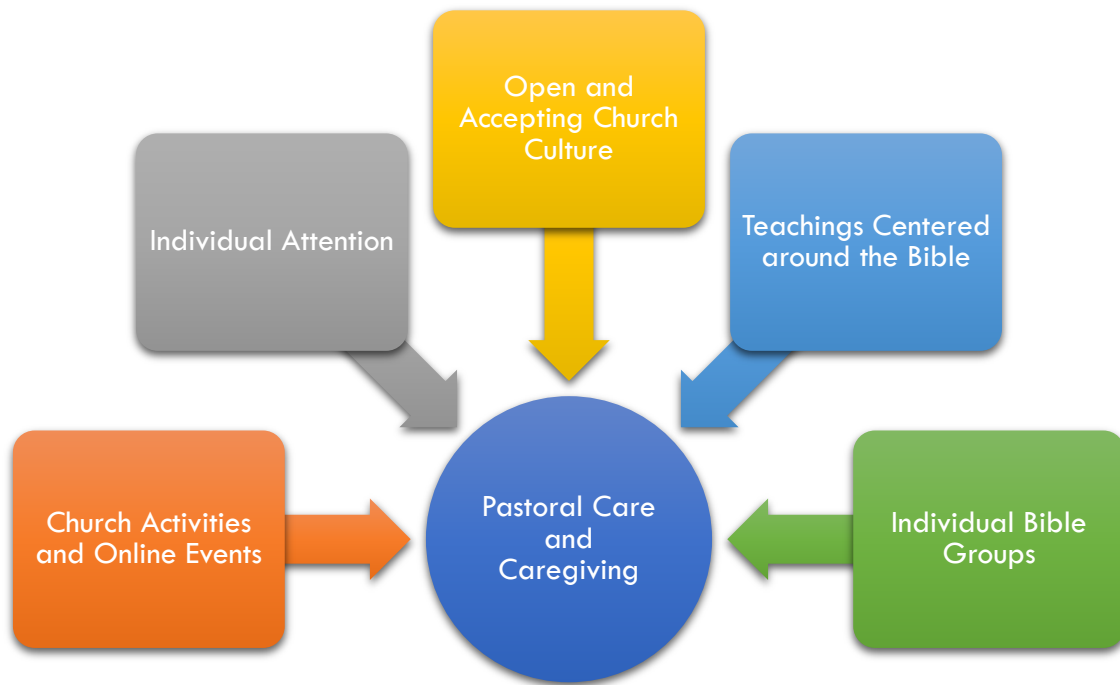
The absence of literature in regard to these findings could also provide a need for further investigation. One of these examples is that much of the literature focused on how the sermon can increase conviction and dedication instead of member engagement and outreach among lay leaders. Future research should focus on lay leaders, member engagement, and how it relates to sermons and conviction. Another avenue for future research would be that many participants mentioned adherence to the Bible as a clear benefit to church members. There was a minimal focus on how the Bible affects church membership within the literature review

Lastly, COVID-19 offers an opportunity to provide new insight and church membership during the pandemic. For instance, what can members do who value their faith but are unable to attend church. What are their options, both legally and morally? Additionally, leadership must figure out what to do when their parishioners gather in large groups of people and are no longer able to assemble. These challenges offer a unique time to perform research.

### **Recommendations for Caregiving and Pastoral Care**

In the implemented case study research design, the data collected through interviews and observational data revealed several recommendations for caregiving and pastoral care that may

aid leadership activities and motivate engagement within the community. Each of the following recommendations is explored in detail in sections I and II (Figure 1).



*Figure 1. Overview of Pastoral Care and Caregiving Recommendations*

## **I. Church Centered-Activities**

In this first section, the three-key church-centered activities are presented. These activities are centered around engagement, events, as well as individual attention. Special consideration is also provided for the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as targeting at-risk groups that are unable to attend in-person activities.

1. Engage members through special events
2. Engage members through focusing on individual attention

### 3. Offer online events to engage at-risk populations

Engagement of membership is crucial for churches and fellowship with the Lord. The data from this study demonstrated that churchgoers are more likely to attend if engaged through special events and individual attention. Churches should focus on creating special outreach events. Outreach events can be uniquely centered around specific messages and teachings that are applicable to the Bible, which is also a practice for services discussed in the following section II. Church events should be open to congregation members as well as calling for the attendance of friends and family members that may wish to join for the first time. Creating outreach events can not only reach the current congregation but may also serve to bring in those in need of a church family.

Subsequently, those that attended can be contacted individually to discuss their feedback, thoughts on church activities in the future, and any needs they are currently facing. Individualized feedback is singular to demonstrating that the church leadership genuinely cares and considers each member of the congregation. Secondly, individual attention can allow for targeting at-risk populations that may need aid but would be otherwise hesitant to reach out. The individual attention can also create a renewed sense of community between the leaders and community through each communication. The church leaders should also be prepared to take notes on those in need or who require a follow-up call (e.g., the case of someone experiencing loss that needs emotional support).

During the current time of the COVID-19 pandemic, the same recommendations can be altered through online events. Large-online events can be off-putting for some individuals due to a lack of personal attention. In such cases, church leaders can also consider small church meetings that engage 10-15 individuals to allow for discussion, as well as creating a sense of

community among online attendees. Online events and individual follow-up can reach critical populations social distancing, as well as elderly and rural groups that would normally struggle to attend services. The recommendations of this study indicate that COVID-19 can present an opportunity for change. The pandemic presents a unique situation that should gather congregations to consider how to offer services, perhaps in online formats, that can still reach critical members of the congregation. Services can also include garnering volunteerism for dropping-off items in a socially distancing-based approach to families and congregation members in need. Thus, creating an online-based system that still gathers the lessons of the Bible and offers service to those in need. Following, the recommendations for church leaders are presented.

## **II. Service and Pastor Centered Caregiving Practices**

The three key recommendations for service and pastor centered caregiving practices are as follow:

1. Provide an opening and accepting church culture
2. Center teachings around the clear application to the Bible.
3. Individual study groups

The first recommendation presented is for leadership to ensure that the church culture that is created is both open and welcoming. Creating a warming church culture can be essential for ensuring that new and existing members feel that they are part of a healthy environment. Creating the focus towards engagement, outreach, and welcoming space, new members may be encouraged to stay in the church for longer periods. For this purpose, creating a welcome and warming environment may in part be possible through following the previous recommendations

regarding church events and following up with individualized attention for congregation members (both potential and existing).

The second recommendation is to provide teachings during sermons that are directly applicable to the Bible. Through creating stories and lessons that can clearly be directed to elements of the Bible, congregation members may feel more assured of the need to apply such lessons in their own lives. Applicable lessons can include focusing on blessing, acceptances, and restoration through discussing key elements of the bible. These specific leadership approaches may also serve to foster a sense of engagement in the church and even lead to renewed conversations in the bible and individual study groups.

The final recommendation is to create individual study groups that focus on engagement and pastoral care. In individual study groups, the pastor can guide the groups towards specific lessons that meet the needs of modern life through the lessons of the Bible. Such an example may include members that are growing through a divorce and require guidance and support from the congregation. The individual study groups can also be conducted in an online platform, such as Zoom, which would enable social distancing while also providing a platform for openly discussing and engagement. Overall, these groups would provide an opportunity to create support as well as infuse the critical lessons of the Bible into the daily lives of the congregation.

The key recommendations presented in this section are focused on activates that engage the church as well as the lay leadership through individual attention, church activities and online events, teaching centered around the bible, an open church culture, and individual bible groups, the pastoral care activities are furthered in a church setting. Also, these activities may lead to bettered engagement, new members, and retention of existing members to new activities. The

renewal of church engagement is essential to spreading the word of the Lord and supporting congregation members in times of need.

### **Implications**

This study has unique implications for social change at the organizational and theoretical level. The first implication grew from the first theme. The theme was that potential members are attracted to special events and individual attention. This theme indicates that organizational events and special occasions help grow the ministry. It is during these times that potential members feel at ease to attend a church event. Therefore, in order to grow a church, these events should be wider and more accepting to non-members. By opening up church events and sponsoring special occasions, potential members may attend future sermons.

The second theme, lay leadership, should be developed to increase member engagement and outreach. Lay leadership also has social implications. Follow-up from lay leaders after special events can help grow church attendance. When lay leaders are placed in a position of power and are granted the opportunity for individual decision-making, church attendance may increase. Lay leaders should feel empowered and trusted to utilize their responsibilities and duties given to them.

The third theme presents church culture as unconditionally welcoming and accepting. This theme should encourage churches to accept a wide variety of individuals openly. No matter the individual's background or personal history. In fact, the church should reach out to vulnerable populations such as those in alcohol or drug rehabilitation facilities. By reaching out

to these populations, individuals may find a place where they can be at peace. Lay leaders and church pastors should welcome all, especially with their sermons.

The theoretical basis for this study focused on shepherding, which involves attending, guarding, and leading a flock. The theoretical basis focused on leadership, offering emotional, spiritual, financial, and physical aid to every individual.<sup>200</sup> There is a caring model which focuses on care and includes providing spiritual leadership.<sup>201</sup> Many churches are small, which helps create positive relationships between leaders and the members. Therefore, shepherding is a personal relationship between congregant and pastor. Pastoral care focuses on restoration, righteousness, accepting, blessings, and comfort, among other variables. The results of the study would add to the theoretical foundation of the importance of engagement. Engagement should occur through events, and outreach could attract all populations, especially those who are vulnerable. Additionally, by adding engagement to the theoretical framework, it would directly relate to how biblical teaching must be a cornerstone of the church.

### **Conclusion**

This project addressed the role of leadership as an activity that improves church membership and how church leadership and shepherding encourage church growth. The goal of this qualitative case study was to understand how leaders improve church membership and how leadership and shepherding promote church growth at Mountain View Church in California. The participants were split between the church leaders and their congregation. Lastly, the thesis for this study was that the shepherding and leadership that members of a congregation experience have an impact on their engagement in the church and their motivation to involve other people in

---

<sup>200</sup> Rummage, *A Model for Pastoral Care*.

<sup>201</sup> Clarke, *A Pauline Theology of Church Leadership*.



the community in the church as well, which in turn supports church growth. Thematic analysis was used for its data analysis process. Four themes were uncovered from this investigation. The first theme was potential members are engaged through special events and individual attention. The second theme was lay leadership is developed to increase members' engagement in outreach. The third theme was church culture is presented as unconditionally welcoming and accepting. Lastly, the fourth theme was church teachings are characterized as clear, applicable, and faithful to the Bible. Ultimately, in comparison with the existing literature, themes one through three all had some degree of alignment, while theme four was not specifically found among current research. This discrepancy, along with changes in research design, presents an opportunity for future research.

## Bibliography

- Abney, Veronica. "21st Century Church Leadership and Pastor Preparation." EdD Colloquium, Olivet Nazarene University, 2018.
- Abujaber, Emil, Maurice A. Buford, James A. Wood Jr, and Bruce E. Winston. "The Impact of Followers' Expectations on Leaders' Behavior: A Case Study of Evangelical Church Leadership in Jordan." *International Leadership Journal* 11, no. 3 (2019).
- Adams, Jay E. *Handbook of Church Discipline*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986.
- Adams, John Quincy. "The Records of the Middle Association of Congregational Churches of the State of New York 1806-1810." *Journal of the Presbyterian Historical Society* (1901-1930) 10, no. 6 (1920): 217-229. Accessed June 2, 2014. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23323433>.
- Allison, Gregg R. *Sojourners and Strangers: The Doctrine of the Church*. Wheaton: Crossway. (2012), 59.
- Bass, Bernard M., and Ronald E. Riggio. *Transformational Leadership*. Psychology Press, 2006.
- Bass, Bernard M., and Bruce J. Avolio, eds. *Improving Organizational Effectiveness through Transformational Leadership*. Newbury, CA: Sage, 1994.
- Barrett, Tyler. "Language Policy in Japanese Ethnic Churches in Canada and the Legitimization of Church Member Identities." *Language Policy* 16, no. 4 (2017): 433-460.
- Barna, George. "Pastors Paid Better, but Attendance Unchanged." (2009). Accessed June 14, 2014. [http://www.barna.org/barna-update/articel/5-barna-update/39-pastors-paid-better-but-attendance-unchanged3.U\\_3flOk9es](http://www.barna.org/barna-update/articel/5-barna-update/39-pastors-paid-better-but-attendance-unchanged3.U_3flOk9es).
- Barna, George. *The Habits of Highly Effective Churches*. Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2002.
- Barker, Steve. *Good Things Come in Small Groups: The Dynamics of Good Group Life*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997.
- Barr, Beth Allison. *The Pastoral Care of Women in Late Medieval England*. Gender in the Middle Ages Series. Woodbridge, England: Boydell & Brewer, 2008.
- Beck, Henry G. J. *The Pastoral Care of Souls in South-East France During the Sixth Century*. Rome: Gregorian University, 1950.
- Bilezikian, Gilbert. "Church Leadership that Kills Community." *Priscilla Papers* 21, no. 4 (2007): 5-7.

- Berkley, James D. *Called into Crisis: The Nine Greatest Challenges of Pastoral Care*. Dallas: Word Publishing, 1989.
- Beaumont, Stephen M. "Pastoral Counseling Down Under: A Survey of Australian Clergy." *Pastoral Psychology*. 60, (2011):117–131. DOI 10.1007/s11089-010-0289-4.
- Bingaman, Kirk A. A Pastoral Theological Approach to the New Anxiety. *Pastoral Psychology* 59 (2010):659–670. DOI 10.1007/s11089-009-0269-8.
- Bisagno, John R. *Letters to Timothy: A Handbook for Pastors*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001.
- Blackaby, Henry, and Richard Blackaby. *Spiritual Leadership*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001.
- Blair, John, and Richard Sharpe. *Pastoral Care Before the Parish*. Leicester, England: Continuum International Publishing, 1992.
- Bolton, Robert. *People Skills: How to Assert Yourself, Listen to Others, and Resolve Conflicts*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979.
- Brandt, Henry, and Kerry L. Skinner. *The Word for the Wise*, 2nd ed. Mobile, AL: K.L.S. LifeChange Ministries, 2008.
- Brooks, Robert Allen. "The Relationship between Transformational Leadership Practices of Pastors and Church Growth in Assembly of God Churches in Tennessee." Ph.D. diss., Northcentral University, 2018.
- Clapp-Smith, Rachel, Michelle M. Hammond, Gretchen Vogelgesang Lester, and Michael Palanski. "Promoting Identity Development in Leadership Education: A Multidomain Approach to Developing the Whole Leader." *Journal of Management Education* 43, no. 1 (2019): 10-34.
- Chaves, Mark. *Congregations on America*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004.
- Christopher Jordan Wilson. "Clergy Leadership Styles: The Effects of Leadership Practices on Growth in Urban Church of God Churches in Alabama." PhD diss., South University, Virginia Beach, 2018.
- Cloud, Henry, and John Townsend. *How People Grow*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 2001.
- Cloud, Henry, and John Townsend. *Making Small Groups Work*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 2003.

- Cole, Hugh Alan, "What Makes Pastoral Care Pastoral?" *Pastoral Psychology*, 59 (2010):711–723. DOI 10.1007/s11089-010-0296-5.
- Cnaan, Ram. *The Other Philadelphia Story: How Local Congregations Support Quality of Life in Urban America*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006.
- Damsteegt, Dan. "Pastoral Roles in Presurgical Visits." *The American Journal of Nursing* 75, no. 8 (1975): 1336-1337.
- Delkeskamp-Hayes, Corrina. "Psychologically Informed Pastoral Care: How Serious Can It Get about God? Orthodox Reflections on Christian Counseling in Bioethics." *Christian Bioethics*, 16, no.1 (2010): 79–116.
- Djupe, A.M., H. Olson, and J. Ryan. "An Institutionally Based Model of Parish Nursing Services." Park Ridge, IL: National Parish Nurse Resource Center, 1991.
- Dever, Mark. *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2000.
- Egan, Gerard. *The Skilled Helper*, 7th ed. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole, 2002.
- Elliot, Lynda D. *How Can I Help? Caring for People Without Hurting Yourself*. Grand Rapids: Chosen Books, 2003.
- Ellis, Shawn. "Designed To Lead: The Church and Leadership Development." *Journal of Applied Christian Leadership* 11, no. 1 (2017): 99-101.
- Erde, E., S. C. Pomerantz, M. Saccocci, V. Kramer-Feeley, and T. A. Cavaleri, "Privacy and Patient-Clergy Access: Perspectives of Patient Admitted to Hospital." *Journal for Medical Ethics* 32, no. 7 (2006): 398-402.
- Eyrich, Howard, and William Hines. *Curing the Heart: A Model for Biblical Counseling*. Ross-shire, U.K.: Christian Focus Publications, 2002.
- Fowler, Gene. "The Ministry of Pastoral Care in Twenty-First Century Protestant Congregations." *Pastoral Psychology* 61 (2012): 191-210.
- Frizzell, Gregory R. *How to Develop a Powerful Prayer Life*. Nashville: The Master Design, 1999.
- Gailliard, Bernadette Marie, and Courtney Wong Davis. "To be Known, Accepted, and Involved: Investigating Organizational Assimilation in Christian Churches." *Southern Communication Journal* 82, no. 3 (2017): 117-128.
- Gallup. U.S. Church Membership Down Sharply in Past Two Decades. Retrieved from <https://news.gallup.com/poll/248837/church-membership-down-sharply-past-two-decades.aspx>

- George, Bill, Peter Sims, Andrew N. McLean, and Diana Mayer. "Discovering your Authentic Leadership." *Harvard Business Review* 85, no. 2 (2007): 129.
- Goering, Joseph, and William de Montibus (c. 1140-1213). *The Schools and Literature of Pastoral Care*. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1992.
- Greig, Pete, and David Blackwell. *The 24-7 Prayer Manual*. Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2008.
- Griffiths, Fiona, J. "The Cross, and the Cura Minimalism: Robert of Arbrissel, John the Evangelist, and the Pastoral Care of Women in the Age of Reform." *Speculum* 83, no. 2 (2008): 303-330.
- Gushee, David P. *Still Christian: Following Jesus Out of American Evangelicalism*. Louisville, KY: Presbyterian Publishing Corp, 2017.
- Hammett, John S., and Benjamin L. Merkle, eds. *Those Who Must Give Account: A Study of Church Membership and Church Discipline*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishing Group, 2012.
- Haugk, Kenneth, C. *Christian Caregiving—A Way of Life*. St. Louis, MO: Stephen Ministries, 1984.
- Haugk, Kenneth C. *When and How to Use Mental Health Resources*. St. Louis, MO: Stephen Ministries, 2000.
- Hawkins, Ronald E. "Pastoral Care and Counseling: Soul Care Centered in the Church." Faculty Publications and Presentations. Paper 151. 2001. Accessed June 14, 2014. [http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/lts\\_fac\\_pubs/151](http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/lts_fac_pubs/151).
- Helms, Elaine. *Prayer 101: What Every Christian Needs to Know*. Birmingham, AL: New Hope Publishing, 2008.
- Hulme, William E. *The Pastoral Care of Families: Its Theology and Practice*. New York: Abingdon Press, 1963.
- Insight for Living. *Counseling Insights: A Biblical Perspective on Caring for People*. Plano, TX: Insight for Living, 2007.
- Pedersen, Jon. "Making Time for Growth: Discipleship for the Families of Shepherd of the Hill Lutheran Church." DMin diss., Fuller University, 2016.
- Jones, C. I. (2018). "The Links Between Leadership Qualities and Functions and Local Church Growth within an Anglican Context: a Case Study Approach." PhD diss., University of Cumbria; awarded by Lancaster University, 2018.

- Jones, Jeffrey M. "U.S. Church Membership Down Sharply in Past Two Decades," *Gallup* (2019): para. 1.
- Jordan, Harold. "Leadership Factors That Influence Church Growth for Western North Carolina Churches of God." PhD diss., Liberty University, 2019.
- Karner, Benjamin Andrew. "Easy Effective Counseling: A Strategy for Busy Pastors." DMin., Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 2013.
- Karagianni, Despoina, and Anthony Jude Montgomery. "Developing Leadership Skills Among Adolescents and Young Adults: A Review of Leadership Programs." *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth* 23, no. 1 (2018): 86-98.
- Keller, Timothy J. *Ministers of Mercy: The Call to the Jericho Road*. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1997.
- Keita, Yera. "Leadership Styles and Their Impact on Church Growth in Alexandria and Springfield, Virginia." PhD diss., Walden University, 2019.
- Krejcir, Richard J. "What's Going on with Pastors in America?" Pasadena, CA: Francis A. Schaeffer Institute of Church Leadership Development. (2007): Accessed June 14, 2014. <http://www.churchleadership.org/apps/articles/default.asp?articleid=42347&columned=4545>.
- Lampman, Lisa Barnes, ed. *Helping a Neighbor in Crisis*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1997.
- Laney, J. Carl. *A Guide to Church Discipline*. Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1985.
- Larson, Bruce, Paul Anderson, and Doug Self. *Mastering Pastoral Care*. Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1990.
- Lattimore, V.L. III. "Pastoral Care Strategies of Black Pastors." Doctoral diss., Northwestern University, 1984.
- Lewis, Robert. *The Church of Irresistible Influence*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 2001.
- Luthans, Fred, and Bruce J. Avolio. "Authentic leadership development." *Positive organizational scholarship* 241 (2003): 258.
- MacArthur, John. *Pastoral Ministry: How to Shepherd Biblically*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2017.
- MacArthur, John, F., Jr, Richard Mayhue, and Robert L. Thomas. *Rediscovering Pastoral Ministry: Shaping Contemporary Ministry with Biblical Mandates*. Dallas: Word Publishing, 1995.

- Malphurs, Aubrey. *Advanced Strategic Planning: A New Model for Church and Ministry Leaders*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005.
- Mantesch, Scott M. *Calvin's Company of Pastors: Pastoral Care and the Emerging Reformed Church, 1536 -1609*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Mary F. Stone and Sheri L. Erickson. "Hometown Community Church: Opportunities and Challenges of Continued Growth." *Issues in Accounting Education* 32, no. 3 (2017): 129-136.
- Mutia, Peter M. "Strategic Leadership and its Influence on Church Growth in Kenya." PhD diss., United States International University-Africa, 2016.
- Maxwell, Katie. *Bedside Manners: A Practical Guide to Visiting Ill*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1990.
- McDermott, Mary Ann, and Joan Burke. When the Population is the Congregation: The Emerging Role of the Parish Nurse. *Journal of Community Health Nursing* 10, no. 3 (1993): 179-190.
- Minatrea, Milfred. *Shaped by God's Heart: The Passion and Ministry of Missional Churches*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004.
- Miskelly, Sandra. A Parish Nursing Model: Applying the Community Health Nursing Process in a Church Community. *Journal of Community Health Nursing* 12, no. 1(1995): 1-14.
- Mutia, Peter M. "Strategic Leadership and its Influence on Church Growth in Kenya." Ph.D. diss., United States International University-Africa, 2016.
- Oden, Thomas C. *Classic Pastoral Care: Pastoral Counsel*. Volume 3. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1987.
- Poirer, Alfred. *The Peace Making Pastor: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Church Conflict*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2006.
- Pope, Randall P. *The Prevailing Church: An Alternative Approach to Ministry*. Chicago: Moody Press, 2002.
- Powell, Ruth, Miriam Pepper, N. Hancock, Sam Sterland, and Kathy Jacka. "Models of Church Vitality: A literature review." *N.C.L.S.* (2019).
- Rainer, Thom S. *Surprising Insights from the Unchurches and Proven Ways to Reach Them*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 2001.

- Ramsey, Janet L. "First Do No Harm: Pastoral Care Informed by Job." *Word & World* 31, 4 (2011): 367-373.
- Raymer, Roger M., "1 Peter," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 855.
- Robinson, Keith. "The Senior Pastor's Role and Responsibilities in Leading a Pastoral Staff." DMin diss., Liberty University, 2010.
- Rummage, Aaron J. "A Model for Pastoral Care and Shepherding of a Large and Growing Church." DMin diss., Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 2005.
- Rowell, Andy. "Why Leadership? The formation and teaching of church leaders should be based on the purpose of the Church." *Academy for Religious Leadership* (2018).
- Sacks, Cheryl. *The Prayer Saturated Church: A Comprehensive Handbook for Prayer Leaders*. Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2007.
- Sande, Ken. *The Peace Maker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004.
- Sanders, J. Oswald. *Spiritual Leadership: Principles of Excellence for Every Believer*. Moody Publishers, 2017.
- Savage, G.S.F. Pioneer Ministers in Illinois: The Kind of Men They Were and the Kind of Work They Did. *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* (1908 -1984) 3, no. 1 (1910): 78-93.
- Seemiller, Corey, and Kerry L. Priest. "Leadership Educator Journeys: Expanding a Model of Leadership Educator Professional Identity Development." *Journal of Leadership Education* 16, no. 2 (2017).
- Scazzero, Peter L. *The Emotionally Healthy Church*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 2003.
- Scherer, Steven. "Training Members at Central Baptist Church in Paris, Kentucky, with a Biblical Understanding and Practice of Church Membership." DMin diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018.
- Shelley, Marshall. *Building Your Church Through Counsel and Care: 30 Strategies to Transform Your Ministry*. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 1997.
- Shelley, Marshall. *Empowering Your Church Through Creativity and Change: 30 Strategies to Transform Your Ministry*. Nashville, TN: Moorings, 1995.



- Sjogren, Steve. *The Perfectly Imperfect Church: Redefining the Ideal Church*. Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, 2002.
- Silva, Alberto. "What is Leadership?" *Journal of Business Studies Quarterly* 8, no. 1 (2016): 1.
- Stanley, C. Andrew, and Edwin B. Young. *Can We Do That? 24 Innovative Practices that Will Change the Way You Do Church*. West Monroe, LA: Howard Publishing, 2002.
- Stetzer, Ed, and Mike Dodson. *Comeback Churches: How 300 Churches Turned Around and Yours Can Too*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishing Group, 2007.
- Stolzenberg, Ross M., Mary Blair-Loy, and Linda J. Waite. "Religious Participation in Early Adulthood: Age and family life cycle effects on church membership." *American Sociological Review* (1995): 84-103.
- Robertson, Deborah. "A Theological Perspective on Heroic Leadership in the Context of Followership and Servant Leadership." *Heroism Science* 2, no. 1 (2017): 3.
- Tan, Siang-Yang. *Lay Counseling: Equipping Christians for a Helping Ministry*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991.
- Tautges, Paul. *Comfort Those Who Grieve: Ministering God's Grace in Times of Loss*. Leominster: Day One, 2009.
- Tautges, Paul. *Counsel Your Flock: Fulfilling Your Role as a Teaching Shepherd*. Leominster, England: Day One, 2009.
- Thompson, Robert S. "The Perception of Servant Leadership Characteristics and Job Satisfaction in a Church-Related College." PhD diss., Indiana State University, 2002.
- Tinti, Francesca, ed. *Pastoral Care in Late Anglo-Saxon England*. Woodbridge, England: Boydell Publishers, 2005.
- Toler, Stan, and Alan Nelson. *The Five Star Church*. Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1999.
- Tripp, Paul David. *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 2002.
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. "Healthy People 2000: National Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Objectives." (DHHS Public No. PHS 91-50212). Washington, DC: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1990.
- Wagner, E. Glenn. *The Church You've Always Wanted*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 2002.
- Watt, Willis M. "Relational Principles for Effective Church Leadership." *Journal of Leadership Education* 13, no. 2 (2014): 125-139.

- Webb, Amy Pieper, Christopher G. Ellison, Michael J. McFarland, Jerry W. Lee, Kelly Morton, and James Walters. "Divorce, Religious Coping, and Depressive Symptoms in a Conservative Protestant Religious Group." *Family Relations* 59, (December 2010): 544-557.
- White, John, and Ken Blue. *Church Discipline that Heals*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985.
- Whitherspoon, Noelle, and Bruce Makoto Arnold. "Pastoral Care: Notions of Caring and the Black Female Principal." *The Journal of Negro Education* 79, no. 3 (2010): 220-232.
- Willmington, Harold. *Willmington's Book of Bible Lists*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1987.
- Wilson, Christopher Jordan. "Clergy Leadership Styles: The Effects of Leadership Practices on Growth in Urban Church of God Churches in Alabama." Ph.D. diss., South University, Virginia Beach, 2018.
- Wright, H. Norman. *The New Guide to Crisis and Trauma Counseling*. Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2003.
- William, Wright. "Wright Way: Religious Attendance Down-Why?" Editorial, Cleveland Daily. (2016).
- Wuthrow, Robert. *Saving America? Faith-Based Services and the Future of Civil Society*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004.
- Younce, Craig. "The Significance of Developing Core Counseling Competencies in Pastoral Care Ministries." DMin., Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 2011.
- Yang, Sungeun. *Making A Healthy Church: Church Growth Strategy Through Spiritual Mentoring*. Ph.D. diss., Fuller, 2019.
- Zuck, Roy, B., ed. *Vital Church Issues: Examining Principles and Practices in Church Leadership*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Resources, 1998.

## APPENDIX A

### List Of All Churches With Attendance Of 500 Or More

Name	Address	Phone	Pastor	Email
Rancho Community Church	31300 Rancho Community Way, Temecula, CA 92592	951-303-6789	Scott Treadway	scott.treadway@rancho.tv
Reliance Church	29825 Santiago Rd, Temecula, CA 92592	951-695-0809	Ted Leavenworth	<a href="mailto:info@reliancechurch.org">info@reliancechurch.org</a>
Orchard church Life	42101 Moraga Rd, Temecula, CA 92591	951-699-5433	Jim Jackson	<a href="mailto:info@orchardchurch.life.com">info@orchardchurch.life.com</a>
CrossPoint Church	28753 Via Montezuma Temecula, CA 92590	951.303.3225	Steve Redden	<a href="mailto:steve@gotocrosspoint.com">steve@gotocrosspoint.com</a> admin@gotocrosspoint.com
Sunridge Community Church	42299 Winchester Rd, Temecula, CA 92590	951-296-1770	Britt Sipe	info@sunridgechurch.org
Hope Lutheran Church	29043 Vallejo Ave, Temecula, CA 9259	951-676-6262	Sandy Bentz	sbentz@hopetemecula.org
Temecula United Methodist Church	42690 Margarita Rd, Temecula, CA 92592	951-676-1800 ex 4	Rick Malec	tumc@temeculaumc.com pastorrick@temeculaumc.com
Grace Presbyterian Church	31143 Nicolas Rd, Temecula, CA 92591	951-695-1913	Neal Neuenschwander	<a href="mailto:office@gracepreschurch.net">office@gracepreschurch.net</a>
Crossroads Church	26090 Ynez Rd Suite A, Temecula, CA 92591	951-695-1123	Gary Jones	
Saint Thomas of Canterbury		951-302-4566	Julie D. Bryant	<a href="mailto:vicar@episcopalchurchtemecula.org">vicar@episcopalchurchtemecula.org</a>

Episcopal Church & School	44651 Avenida de Misiones, Temecula, CA 92592			
The Church in Temecula	45764 Corte Mislanca, Temecula, CA 92592	626-377-1697		
Calvary Baptist Church	31087 Nicolas Rd, Temecula, CA 92591	951-676-8700	Pastor W.M. Rench	<a href="mailto:info@cbctemecula.com">info@cbctemecula.com</a>
Fusion Christian Church	31217 Pauba Rd #102, Temecula, CA 92592	951-676-8511		<a href="mailto:info@myfusionchurch.com">info@myfusionchurch.com</a>
Beyond the Walls Community Church	42110 Remington Ave, Temecula, CA 92590	951-296-0856	Demetric Felton	
Temecula Hills Christian Fellowship	42075 Meadows Pkwy, Temecula, CA 92592	951-790-2010	Nathanael King	<a href="mailto:office@temeculahills.org">office@temeculahills.org</a>
Providence Presbyterian Church	26109 Ynez Rd, Temecula, CA 92591	951-551-9177		<a href="mailto:info@providencetemecula.com">info@providencetemecula.com</a>
The Springs Community Church	41735 Winchester Rd # C, Temecula, CA 92590	951-296-3907	Bob Branch	<a href="https://www.thespringscc.org/about-us/staff/">https://www.thespringscc.org/about-us/staff/</a>

## APPENDIX B

### List Of 23 Churches To Which The Survey Was Mailed

Name	Address	Phone	Pastor	Email
Rancho Community Church	31300 Rancho Community Way, Temecula, CA 92592	951-303-6789	Scott Treadway	scott.treadway@rancho.tv
Reliance Church	29825 Santiago Rd, Temecula, CA 92592	951-695-0809	Ted Leavenworth	<a href="mailto:info@reliancechurch.org">info@reliancechurch.org</a>
Orchard church Life	42101 Moraga Rd, Temecula, CA 92591	951-699-5433	Jim Jackson	<a href="mailto:info@orchardchurch.life.com">info@orchardchurch.life.com</a>
CrossPoint Church	28753 Via Montezuma Temecula, CA 92590	951.303.3225	Steve Redden	<a href="mailto:steve@gotocrosspoint.com">steve@gotocrosspoint.com</a> admin@gotocrosspoint.com
Sunridge Community Church	42299 Winchester Rd, Temecula, CA 92590	951-296-1770	Britt Sipe	info@sunridgechurch.org
Hope Lutheran Church	29043 Vallejo Ave, Temecula, CA 9259	951-676-6262	Sandy Bentz	sbentz@hopetemecula.org
Temecula United Methodist Church	42690 Margarita Rd, Temecula, CA 92592	951-676-1800 ex 4	Rick Malec	tumc@temeculaumc.com pastorrick@temeculaumc.com
Grace Presbyterian Church	31143 Nicolas Rd, Temecula, CA 92591	951-695-1913	Neal Neuenschwander	<a href="mailto:office@gracepreschurch.net">office@gracepreschurch.net</a>
Crossroads Church	26090 Ynez Rd Suite A, Temecula, CA 92591	951-695-1123	Gary Jones	
Saint Thomas of Canterbury Episcopal	44651 Avenida de	951-302-4566	Julie D. Bryant	<a href="mailto:vicar@episcopalchurchtemecula.org">vicar@episcopalchurchtemecula.org</a>

Church & School	Misiones, Temecula, CA 92592			
The Church in Temecula	45764 Corte Mislana, Temecula, CA 92592	626-377-1697		
Calvary Baptist Church	31087 Nicolas Rd, Temecula, CA 92591	951-676-8700	Pastor W.M. Rench	<a href="mailto:info@cbctemecula.com">info@cbctemecula.com</a>
Fusion Christian Church	31217 Pauba Rd #102, Temecula, CA 92592	951-676-8511		<a href="mailto:info@myfusionchurch.com">info@myfusionchurch.co m</a>
Beyond the Walls Community Church	42110 Remington Ave, Temecula, CA 92590	951-296-0856	Demetric Felton	
Temecula Hills Christian Fellowship	42075 Meadows Pkwy, Temecula, CA 92592	951-790-2010	Nathanael King	<a href="mailto:office@temeculahills.org">office@temeculahills.org</a>
Providence Presbyterian Church	26109 Ynez Rd, Temecula, CA 92591	951-551-9177		<a href="mailto:info@providencetemecula.com">info@providencetemecula .com</a>
The Springs Community Church	41735 Winchester Rd # C, Temecula, CA 92590	951-296-3907	Bob Branch	<a href="https://www.thespringscc.org/about-us/staff/">https://www.thespringscc. org/about-us/staff/</a>

## APPENDIX C

### Cover Letter And Survey

#### RECRUITMENT

Date:

Name of Organization

Address

City, State, Zip Code

Greeting:

As a graduate student in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The purpose of my research is to arrange a useful model of pastoral care for the subsequent stages in our Church foundation, and I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be 18 years of age or older, the staff member over pastoral care and should have at least one year in the leadership role. Participants, if willing, will be asked to fill out a questionnaire to summarize methods used in daily operations of ministry. It should take about 15 to 20 minutes to complete the procedures listed. Participation will be completely anonymous, and no personal, identifying information will be collected.

The information collected in this survey may shed light on how some larger churches in the Temecula Valley are meeting that challenge of rapid growth of their church's congregation in the new millennium.

To participate, please complete the attached questionnaire and return it to me using the enclosed pre-stamped envelope by July 10, 2020.

A consent document is attached to this letter and contains additional information about my research, but you do not need to sign and return it.

Thank You,

Willis Dean Wainwright

[Willis.wainwright@gmail.com](mailto:Willis.wainwright@gmail.com)

310-347-9255

## PASTORAL CARE SURVEY

1. Are you currently over the age of 18? \_\_\_\_ Yes or \_\_\_\_ No
2. Have you been on staff as the Pastor Care group leader at least one year? \_\_\_\_ Yes or \_\_\_\_ No.
3. What material are you presently finding most effective in the following areas?  
New Membership \_\_\_\_\_  
Visitor Engagement \_\_\_\_\_  
Marriage Retreats \_\_\_\_\_  
Single Parenting \_\_\_\_\_  
New Brides/Grooms \_\_\_\_\_  
Premarital Counseling \_\_\_\_\_  
Other \_\_\_\_\_
4. If you use support groups, which groups have been utilized over the past 2 years?  
\_\_\_\_\_ Single Parents  
\_\_\_\_\_ Divorce  
\_\_\_\_\_ Battered Women  
\_\_\_\_\_ Grief Support Group  
\_\_\_\_\_ Other Illness  
\_\_\_\_\_ Others
5. Which large/small groups are active at your church on a continuing basis?  
\_\_\_\_\_ Men's Group  
\_\_\_\_\_ Women's Group  
\_\_\_\_\_ Bible Studies  
\_\_\_\_\_ Support Groups  
\_\_\_\_\_ Alcoholism Recovery  
\_\_\_\_\_ Others



7. What were the most significant benefits of the above groups' successes?

---

7. What pastoral care workshops or seminars do you conduct?

---

8. What single thing have you found to be the most productive in new member follow-up?

9. What do you attribute to the success of your pastoral care program?

---

10. What percentage of your pastoral care provided at your church is from the different support groups?

---

11. What were the most significant changes you had to make in your pastoral care to help increase church growth?

---

12. What specific areas in pastoral care did you increase more; layperson or paid staff?

13. Who in your church group would be contacted in the event of the following?

	Senior Pastor	Associate Pastors	Elders	Deacons	Group Leaders	Lay leaders	Others
Family death							
Suicide							
Hospitalization							
Marriages							
Child abandonment							
Other							

14. Are there any groups within your church that add more efforts toward pastoral care than others? Please explain.

15. What are some of the growing pains you have experienced in pastoral care as your church numbers increase?

---

16. What area(s) of pastoral care has your church trained lay persons to do? Please check below.

- \_\_\_\_ Men's Group
- \_\_\_\_ Women's Group
- \_\_\_\_ Bible Studies
- \_\_\_\_ Support Groups
- \_\_\_\_ Single Parents
- \_\_\_\_ Divorce
- \_\_\_\_ Battered women
- \_\_\_\_ Grief support groups
- \_\_\_\_ Other Illness
- \_\_\_\_ New Membership
- \_\_\_\_ Visitor Engagement
- \_\_\_\_ Marriage Retreats
- \_\_\_\_ Single Parenting
- \_\_\_\_ New Brides/Grooms
- \_\_\_\_ Premarital Counseling

17. Are there any other things you would like to share that I might not have covered in the above questions?

## APPENDIX D

### Recruitment Consent Letter

#### Consent

**Title of the Project:** A Model for Pastoral Care and Shepherding of a Midsize Growing Church

**Principal Investigator:** Willis Dean Wainwright, Student, Liberty University School of Divinity

#### Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. In order to participate, you must be 18 years of age or older, the staff member over pastoral care, and you must have one year in that position. 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 the study is to enhance shepherding and care to give in the ministry; it is essential to involve relevant personnel in the implementation of the strategy or plan. The clergy and the clerics on their part should take up the role of Christ as the "Great Shepherd" (Hebrews 13:20) and thus act as the primary church shepherd who should take care of the flock, congregation. The leadership of established congregation constituencies should also express their support towards caregiving to the congregation and hence make the flock feel appreciated.

#### 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. Complete an anonymous questionnaire. It should take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete.
2. Please return the questionnaire as soon as possible in the enclosed business reply envelope. Please do not place your name or a return address on the self-addressed envelope.

#### How could you or others benefit from this study?

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

#### 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 questionnaire responses will be anonymous. Data from this research will be kept in a locked filing cabinet and on a password protected computer. After 3 years, all electronic data will be deleted, and hard copy data will be shredded.

Liberty University  
IRB-FY19-20-305  
Approved on 6-26-2020

**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 prior to returning the questionnaire 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 inform the researcher that you wish to discontinue your participation, and do not submit your study materials. Your responses will not be recorded or included in this study.

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

The researcher conducting this study is Willis Dean Wainwright. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact him at (310) 347-9255 or email at [willis.wainwright@gmail.com](mailto:willis.wainwright@gmail.com). You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Donald Quentin Hicks, at [dqhicks@liberty.edu](mailto:dqhicks@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](mailto:irb@liberty.edu)

**Your Consent**

Before agreeing to be part of the research, please be sure that you understand what the study is about. You may keep this copy of this document for your records. If you have any questions about the study later, you can contact the researcher using the information provided above.

Liberty University  
IRB-FY19-20-305  
Approved on 6-26-2020

## IRB APPROVAL LETTER



# LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

## INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

June 26, 2020

Willis Wainwright  
Donald Hicks

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY19-20-305 A MODEL FOR PASTORAL CARE AND SHEPHERDING OF A MID-SIZED GROWING CHURCH

Dear Willis Wainwright, Donald Hicks:

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

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

Category 2.(i). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording).

The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

Your stamped consent form can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. This form should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document should be made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

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

Sincerely,

**G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP**

*Administrative Chair of Institutional Research*  
**Research Ethics Office**