

# CHURCH LEADERS AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT

## A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY: CHURCH LEADERS AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT

by

Booker Mitchell

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Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

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### **Abstract**

As a sector of the nonprofit industry, churches strive to execute the mission, realize the vision, and accomplish the strategic objectives established by their leaders. Comprising pastors, elders, and deacons, church leaders are responsible for the spiritual guidance of the congregation and performing as business managers of the organization. Specifically, church leaders are responsible for managing the unique events or special operations of their organizations, aligning them with vision and mission of the organization. A literature review revealed significant challenges among church leaders in their performance as business managers. This qualitative, multiple-case study sought to obtain information of the knowledge, skills, and abilities of church leaders in managing the projects executed by their organizations. The primary data collection method for the research study consisted of interviews with 13 church leaders from Virginia, Mississippi, and Texas. Emergent themes developed from the responses included planning, coordinating, organizing, commanding, and controlling. The study concludes that church leaders have knowledge of the emergent themes. Opportunities for development exist for church leaders in their skills and abilities for activities involved in the areas of planning, commanding, and controlling. These findings arise from a comparison to previous literature and relationship to the conceptual framework. The results of the study contribute to the body of literature on church leaders and project management.

*Key words:* church leaders, knowledge, skills, abilities, unique events, special operations

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**Approvals**

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### **Dedication**

This dissertation represents a commitment I made to my parents many years ago to obtain my college education after joining the military following high school. My dad, who always wanted the best for me, was the most competent and smartest business manager I have known even though he lacked a formal education. My mom, performing as a business manager for several churches, is an excellent example of the servant leadership and stewardship concepts. Her sacrifice helped the churches she served to accomplish their vision and strategic goals.

### Acknowledgements

Throughout this dissertation process, I would often become discouraged, thinking I was not special or not that smart. Whenever I felt like this, however, I would be reminded by a person, song, or note on the internet that “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Phil. 4.13, *New King James Version*). Because he provided the light when I was like a child afraid of the dark, I will always give honor and glory to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Next, I must acknowledge my family members, who supported and backed me throughout my education journey, including this dissertation. The first is my wife, who loved me during the struggles and celebrated with me in triumphs. The contributions of my in-laws, Herman and Gene Conley, are immeasurable; they kept me motivated and pushed me to the end. My brothers and sisters gave words of advice and wisdom.

An important person who guided me through the process was my chair, Dr. Farlik. From the beginning, he nurtured me, making sure I understood the difficulties and challenges of the dissertation process. He then became a mentor, offering advice through each assignment or directing me to a reliable source. Finally, he displayed tough love by giving me a brutal but honest assessment of my performance, motivating me to finish the journey. In each phase, his encouragement and support were instrumental in completing this process. Along with Dr. Farlik, Dr. Fail and the Liberty staff provided the necessary guidance and direction for me to accomplish my dream of earning a doctoral degree.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the study participants. During the interviews, they not only answered the questions, but offered me words of encouragement and sustainment.

**Table of Contents**

|   |      |
|---|------|
| Abstract .....                                | ii   |
| Dedication .....                              | iv   |
| Acknowledgements .....                        | v    |
| List of Tables .....                          | xii  |
| List of Figures .....                         | xiii |
| Section 1: Foundation of the Study .....      | 1    |
| Background of the Problem .....               | 1    |
| Problem Statement .....                       | 3    |
| Purpose Statement .....                       | 4    |
| Nature of the Study .....                     | 6    |
| Discussion of Method .....                    | 6    |
| Discussion of Design .....                    | 7    |
| Summary of the Nature of the Study .....      | 9    |
| Research Questions .....                      | 9    |
| Servant Leadership .....                      | 13   |
| Stewardship Theory .....                      | 14   |
| Project Governance .....                      | 15   |
| Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities .....        | 17   |
| Summary of the Conceptual Framework .....     | 19   |
| Definition of Terms .....                     | 19   |
| Assumptions, Limitations, Delimitations ..... | 21   |

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Assumptions.....  | 21 |
| Limitations .....   | 22 |
| Delimitations.....  | 23 |
| Significance of the Study .....                           | 23 |
| Reduction of Gaps.....                                    | 23 |
| Implications for Biblical Integration.....                | 24 |
| Relationship to Field of Study .....                      | 26 |
| Summary of the Significance of the Study .....            | 27 |
| A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature..... | 27 |
| Church Leaders .....                                      | 28 |
| Categories of Church Leaders.....                         | 34 |
| Personal Development of Church Leaders .....              | 35 |
| Formal Learning.....                                      | 36 |
| Informal Learning .....                                   | 40 |
| Performance as Servant Leaders .....                      | 44 |
| Performance as Stewards .....                             | 48 |
| Performance as Business Managers.....                     | 49 |
| Summary of Church Leader.....                             | 54 |
| Nonprofit Industry .....                                  | 54 |
| Common Characteristics of Nonprofits .....                | 56 |
| Religious Organizations.....                              | 59 |
| Church.....   | 60 |
| Universal Church .....                                    | 61 |

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Local Church.....  | 61  |
| Business Management of the Local Church .....                        | 62  |
| Summary of Church.....   | 68  |
| Projects.....  | 69  |
| Project Failure.....   | 70  |
| Project Manager .....  | 74  |
| Project Governance .....   | 79  |
| Project Governance Relationship with Servant Leadership Theory ..... | 81  |
| Project Governance's Relationship with Stewardship Theory .....      | 82  |
| Project Life Cycle .....   | 82  |
| Church Leaders and Church Project Management .....                   | 86  |
| Transition and Summary of Section 1 .....                            | 90  |
| Section 2: The Project.....  | 93  |
| Purpose Statement.....   | 94  |
| Role of the Researcher .....   | 96  |
| Participants.....  | 99  |
| Research Method and Design .....                                     | 100 |
| Discussion of Method .....   | 101 |
| Discussion of Design .....   | 102 |
| Summary of Research Method and Design .....                          | 103 |
| Population and Sampling .....  | 103 |
| Discussion of Population .....                                       | 104 |
| Discussion of Sampling .....   | 104 |



|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Summary of Population and Sampling .....  | 106 |
| Data Collection .....   | 107 |
| Instruments.....  | 107 |
| Data Collection Techniques .....  | 112 |
| Data Organization Techniques.....   | 114 |
| Summary of Data Collection .....  | 117 |
| Data Analysis .....   | 117 |
| Organize and Prepare .....  | 117 |
| Reading through the Data .....  | 118 |
| Coding the Data .....   | 118 |
| Interrelating Themes/Descriptions.....  | 120 |
| Interpreting the Meaning of Themes/Descriptions .....                             | 121 |
| Summary of Data Analysis .....  | 121 |
| Reliability and Validity.....   | 121 |
| Reliability.....  | 122 |
| Validity .....  | 123 |
| Summary of Reliability and Validity .....   | 126 |
| Transition and Summary of Section 2 .....   | 126 |
| Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change ..... | 128 |
| Overview of the Study .....   | 128 |
| Presentation of the Findings.....   | 132 |
| Interpretation of the Themes .....  | 132 |
| Theme 1: Planning .....   | 132 |

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Theme 2: Coordinating .....  | 134 |
| Theme 3: Organizing .....  | 136 |
| Theme 4: Commanding.....   | 139 |
| Theme 5: Controlling.....  | 142 |
| Relationships among the Findings .....                             | 144 |
| Relationship of Themes to the Research Questions.....              | 144 |
| Relationship of the Themes to the Conceptual Framework.....        | 148 |
| Relationship of the Emergent Themes to the Anticipated Themes..... | 152 |
| Relationship of the Themes to the Literature.....                  | 154 |
| Relationship to the Problem.....                                   | 157 |
| Summary of Findings.....   | 158 |
| Applications to Professional Practice .....                        | 160 |
| Improving Project Management Practice.....                         | 160 |
| Improving General Business Practice .....                          | 163 |
| Summary of Applications to Professional Practice .....             | 164 |
| Recommendations for Action .....                                   | 164 |
| Recommendations for Further Study .....                            | 166 |
| Reflections .....  | 167 |
| Personal Growth.....   | 167 |
| Professional Growth.....   | 168 |
| Biblical Perspective .....   | 168 |
| Summary and Study Conclusion.....                                  | 170 |
| References.....  | 172 |

|                                     |     |
|-------------------------------------|-----|
| Appendix A: Recruitment Email ..... | 214 |
| Appendix B: Screening Survey .....  | 216 |
| Appendix C: Interview Guide .....   | 217 |

**List of Tables**

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Table 1. Participant Information ..... | 130 |
|--|-----|

**List of Figures**

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Figure 1. Relationships Between Concepts ..... | 12  |
| Figure 2. Location of Participants.....        | 129 |

### **Section 1: Foundation of the Study**

As an entity within the nonprofit sector, churches perform business operations in pursuit of their organizational objectives (Kao, 2018; Yip & Ainsworth, 2015). An integral element of business operations is selecting and executing projects to accomplish specific objectives (Jalocah et al., 2019). To successfully complete these unique operations and events, an organization needs leaders who possess the knowledge, skills, and ability to manage the process. Research indicates that by and large, church leaders responsible for executing the business functions of religious institutions have only limited knowledge of how to do so effectively (Dantis, 2015; Rathi et al., 2016). The lack of knowledge, skills, and abilities related to project management among church leaders could lead to project failure and mismanagement of resources, negatively influencing the performance of the religious entity.

#### **Background of the Problem**

As nonprofit organizations, religious institutions or faith-based organizations will show different leadership dynamics from corporate companies and for-profit business entities. One difference lies the qualifying factors for selection as a pastor, or leader of a church. Members and attendees of religious institutions normally recognize leaders as spiritually gifted to preside over the congregation and provide guidance on how to follow Christ and serve God (Krishnakumar et al., 2015; Vann, 2015). Although their primary responsibility is ostensibly the spiritual welfare of their congregations, church leaders will also, church leaders will also manage the business operations and projects of the institution.

Church leaders often have difficulties managing the business operations of their organizations (Masenya & Booyse, 2016; Plastow, 2018). The poor leadership and mismanagement of organizational operations among church leaders stem from failure to master

several managerial competencies. Allen et al. (2018) identified five emergent themes in the religious environment: new and unfamiliar groups and situations; messy, complex, and evolving problems; differences in needs between groups and individuals; the need to create attractive and inclusive organizational cultures; and the challenge of creating sustainable dialogue. These themes indicate that the changing demographics of congregations necessitate improvements in human capital management by church leaders. In another study, McAllum (2018) notes that various management issues—integrating the volunteer workforce with paid staff, unprofessionalism in the workplace, workforce conflict, and unmet expectations by volunteers—are negatively affecting churches' performance in accomplishing their goals.

The lack of financial knowledge, skills, and abilities among church leaders can lead to fraud and wasteful activities in religious institutions. Vann (2015) suggested that church leaders are unqualified to manage institutional operations and projects; a lack of financial management skill often leads church leaders to invest in unprofitable projects or improperly execute their organizational budgets. A study by Thornhill et al. (2016) found that churches often lack internal controls, making them vulnerable to misappropriation and fraud. From 2006 to 2011, over 500 faith-based organizations filed for bankruptcy under Chapter 11; a primary cause for the bankruptcies was lack of financial management (Foohey, 2015). Johnson et al. (2020) estimated that in 2019 alone, \$60 billion dollars were embezzled from churches and religious organizations around the world. Contributing factors for the embezzlement are trust among religious organizations, lack of fraud detection policies, and concern among the victims for not realizing the activities were happening. The concern were failure among the victims to recognize the fraud was occurring and are too ashamed to report the fraud in the aftermath.

Haskell, Flatt, and Burgoyne (2016) conducted a study comparing growing and declining congregations, with results showing that declining churches were more likely to report conflict over finances, program priorities, denominational actions, leadership style, leaders' personal behavior, members' personal behavior, and other matters. In another study, Thiessen et al. (2018) suggest strategic leadership and innovation from leaders were critical factors for congregational flourishing. In a study of how pastoral leadership influenced human capital within the Methodist church (Engelberg et al., 2016), high-performing pastors proved more likely to be assigned to larger congregations, while pastors who received low performance assessments often rotated to smaller congregations or exited the ministry altogether. Overall, a lack of management competencies is hindering the performance of church leaders in guiding their organizations to accomplish their mission.

A specific managerial competency church leaders may lack is project management. Projects are specific events or unique operations with specific goals (Söderlund & Sydow, 2019). Projects are temporary endeavors that aim to further the success of the organization toward accomplishing its mission. Nonprofits such as religious organizations are vulnerable to project failure for several causes, including board inadequacies, project management issues, funding constraints, and external environmental threats (Zhai et al., 2017). The aim of this research is to determine if church leaders have sufficient knowledge, skills, and abilities related to project management to manage unique events or special operations within their organizations to accomplish their objectives.

### **Problem Statement**

The general problem addressed is the lack of knowledge, skills, and abilities among church leaders to manage unique events or special operations, resulting in projects' failure to



accomplish their objectives (Krishnakumar et al., 2015; Sparkman, 2017; Tkaczynski et al., 2016). In a role-playing survey of American churchgoers, Dunaetz (2019) found that conflict among participants concerning specific project objectives developed during program-related activities of churches. The findings suggested that conflict management training can help church leaders implement programs to accomplish specific objectives. Sparkman (2017) posited that effective leadership development for church denomination executives should include project management opportunities, allowing church leaders to develop a vision, plan and implement a strategy, lead people of various backgrounds, and reflect on lessons learned. Wollschleger (2018) conducted a mixed-method study showing that pastoral management affects congregational vitality, but is both undertheorized and underresearched. The specific problem addressed in the present study is the lack of knowledge, skills, and abilities of local church leaders in Virginia, Mississippi, and Texas to manage a unique event or special operation resulting in the project's failure to accomplish its objectives.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to gain an understanding of the influence of project management knowledge, skills, and abilities on the capacity for church leaders to accomplish the specific objectives of a unique event or special operation. The researcher explored the larger problem by conducting an in-depth study of church leaders in Virginia, Mississippi, and Texas. The teachings and actions of Jesus Christ can be applied to the body of knowledge of the Project Management Institute (PMI), demonstrating a direct link between the two that improves the performance of leaders (Mihai, 2018). In an article, White and Acheampong (2017) connect the importance of planning and management for church leaders as for God, as they guide organizations toward accomplishing the mission agenda. Church leaders

have the responsibility to seek opportunities to improve their performance as organizational managers (Block, 2013).

A review of current research by Munday et al. (2019) noted that giving to religious institutions represent 31% of all charitable donations. Although religious organizations receive financial resources, church leaders who lack managerial knowledge, skills, and abilities mismanage these contributions (Johnson et al., 2015). One study indicated lack of managerial internal controls increases opportunities for fraud and misuse of church resources (Thornhill et al., 2016). Foohey (2015) found that church leaders often lack financial knowledge, and concern for their image leads them to poor financial decisions for their organizations. Munday et al. (2019) called for more research concerning church leaders' resource management, with the goal of improving the performance of religious organizations. Thus, the present research seeks strategies for improving resource management of church leaders.

This study explores the competencies of project management (as defined by PMI), which are necessary to improve the performance of church leaders in managing projects. The researcher collected data from leaders of small, medium-sized, and large organizations to determine their understanding of the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed for project management and its application toward business operations. For this research project, the definition of "church leader" is a person appointed or responsible for presiding over the spiritual and business components of the organization.

For the research study, the definitions of *knowledge*, *skills*, and *abilities* are in accordance with federal regulations (Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures, 1978). *Knowledge* refers to the body of information of a factual or procedural nature to perform adequately the duties of the job. *Skills* in the context of this study means proficiency in manually,

verbally, or mentally manipulating data or objects for job performance. *Ability* refers to the power to perform an observable activity needed for job performance at the appropriate time.

The research findings may allow more church leaders to explore opportunities to increase their understanding of project management and thus improve the performance of their organizations and their own management of resources. The case study contributes to an understanding of how project management knowledge, skills, and abilities can influence the performance of church leaders in managing unique events or special operations to accomplish the project objectives of their religious organizations in Virginia, Mississippi, and Texas.

### **Nature of the Study**

This study uses a qualitative multiple case study research design. When conducting an inquiry, a researcher can select from three types of study designs: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method (Creswell & Poth, 2018). After reviewing each study design, the researcher determined that qualitative research best suited the purpose of the inquiry, in that it explores relationships or emerging causality from an idea (Haven & Van Grootel, 2019). The nature of this qualitative study was to develop an explanatory view to determine if project management knowledge, skills, and abilities are helping church leaders manage unique events or special operations to accomplish the project objective.

### ***Discussion of Method***

Quantitative research is a systematic empirical inquiry into social events or people using statistical or mathematical analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher collects data in numerical form for quantitative analysis (Robson & McCartan, 2016). This research design requires careful planning and a focus on variables for analysis. The purpose of the present study is exploring through human voices how the knowledge, skills, and abilities of project

management influence church leaders' performance; a quantitative research method is not appropriate for this purpose.

Mixed methods employ a systematic integration of quantitative and qualitative data during a single inquiry or sustained study (Robson & McCartan, 2016). Data collection and analysis will use both quantitative and qualitative methods (Mitchell, 2018). Using mixed research method requires rigorous preparation; the researcher must follow proper procedures to ensure the quantitative and qualitative components are appropriate. During the implementation and integration of the analysis, it is vital to identify the processes for quantitative or qualitative components as either concurrent or sequential (Turner et al., 2017). The objective of the present study is to capture the language and imagery of church leaders as they reflect on the knowledge, skills, and abilities related to project management. Given a lack of definite quantitative questions, a qualitative research method is preferred for this study.

Qualitative design allows the researcher to address issues and concepts relevant to individuals, groups, or cultures to gain an understanding of a phenomenon in a local context (Haven & Van Grootel, 2019). One objective of qualitative research is to develop a story or narrative of a person, group, or situation (Gog, 2015). The aim of this inquiry is to explore if project management knowledge, skills, or abilities are helping church leaders manage specific events or unique tasks; thus, a qualitative research method is appropriate for this study.

### ***Discussion of Design***

The qualitative research method comprises five designs that can explore an issue with aims for an explanation and understanding: phenomenological, narrative, ethnographic, grounded theory, and case study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). If using a phenomenological method, the researcher explores the essence of a single phenomenon as experienced by the participants

(Jackson et al., 2018). The objective of this inquiry design is to focus on the participant's lived experiences in relation to the event (Valentine et al., 2018). This research design is not appropriate for the present study because the aim is to determine if the participants have knowledge, skills, or abilities of project management and use them to manage unique events or special operations. The narrative design is a form of qualitative research that aims to explore an individual's perspective about a culture, specific event, or historical experience (Seal & Mattimoe, 2016). The participants' stories are the raw data of the study, collected as written words, spoken accounts, and visual representations (George & Selimos, 2018). For the present study, the narrative method is not ideal because the participants without project management knowledge, skills, and abilities cannot provide meaningful narratives.

A systematic research design, ethnography is the study of people and their cultures. When conducting an ethnographic study, researchers use several data collection methods, including observations, review of literature, and review of visual artifacts (Cappellaro, 2017). By collecting data from multiple sources, the researcher gains an understanding of the factors influencing the decision-making process and behavior of the participants. Ethnographic studies requires participants to have knowledge, skills, and abilities relevant to the topic; therefore, this design was not optimal for the current qualitative research inquiry.

Grounded theory research design aims to develop an understanding of an event or human behavior using a systematic and rigorous process of data collection and analysis (Carlin & Kim, 2019). An issue with this design is the initial analysis of the data leads to the research subject (Sato, 2019). Because the researcher is seeking to explore a specific subject, the grounded research design is not suitable for the present inquiry.

For this research project, the chosen design is a qualitative multiple case study. Yin (2018) touted case study as an effective research method for investigating a contemporary phenomenon in a real-world context. A significant difference between the selected design and others is a case study does not seek to establish a theory (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This inquiry involves collecting and analyzing data about a case or organization. In the data analysis, the researcher investigates the specific phenomena of project management and church leaders (Gog, 2015). Examining actual cases can help the study contribute to the development of solutions for a business problem (Ridder, 2017). By conducting this case study, the researcher is exploring the degree to which knowledge, skills, and abilities regarding project management influence the performance of church leaders in managing their organizations.

### ***Summary of the Nature of the Study***

This qualitative study explores whether church leaders' knowledge, skills, and abilities regarding project management affect their management of unique operations or events to align with the organization's primary business objectives. The preferred design for this inquiry is a multiple case study, which allows the researcher to explore a central phenomenon from multiple perspectives in a specific time (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin 2018). With reliable and valid data collection and analysis, the researcher will conduct the inquiry to contribute to religious organizations and project management literature.

### **Research Questions**

**RQ1.** How do local church leaders use their knowledge, skills and abilities to define a unique event or special operation so as to align it with the organization's vision and mission and integrate it into the organization's normal business practices and processes?

**RQ2.** How do local church leaders in Virginia, Mississippi, and Texas manage unique events or special operations to accomplish their objectives?

**RQ2a.** What elements of project management knowledge affect the way local church leaders in Virginia, Mississippi, and Texas manage unique events or special operations to accomplish their objectives?

**RQ2b.** What project management skills affect how local church leaders in Virginia, Mississippi, and Texas manage unique events or special operations to accomplish their objectives?

**RQ2c.** What project management abilities affect how local church leaders in Virginia, Mississippi, and Texas manage unique events or special operations to accomplish their objectives?

**RQ3.** How do local church leaders in Virginia, Mississippi, and Texas allocate resources for unique events or special operations?

**RQ3a.** What elements of project management knowledge affect how local church leaders in Virginia, Mississippi, and Texas allocate resources in a scarce resource environment for unique events or special operations?

**RQ3b.** What project management skills affect how local church leaders in Virginia, Mississippi, and Texas allocate resources in a scarce resource environment for unique events or special operations?

**RQ3c.** What project management abilities affect how local church leaders in Virginia, Mississippi, and Texas allocate resources in a scarce resource environment for unique events or special operations?

**RQ4.** How do local church leaders in Virginia, Mississippi, and Texas develop and lead project teams to accomplish unique events or special operations?

**RQ4a.** What elements of project management knowledge affect how local church leaders in Virginia, Mississippi, and Texas develop and lead project teams to accomplish unique events or special operations?

**RQ4b.** What project management skills affect how local church leaders in Virginia, Mississippi, and Texas develop and lead project teams to accomplish unique events or special operations?

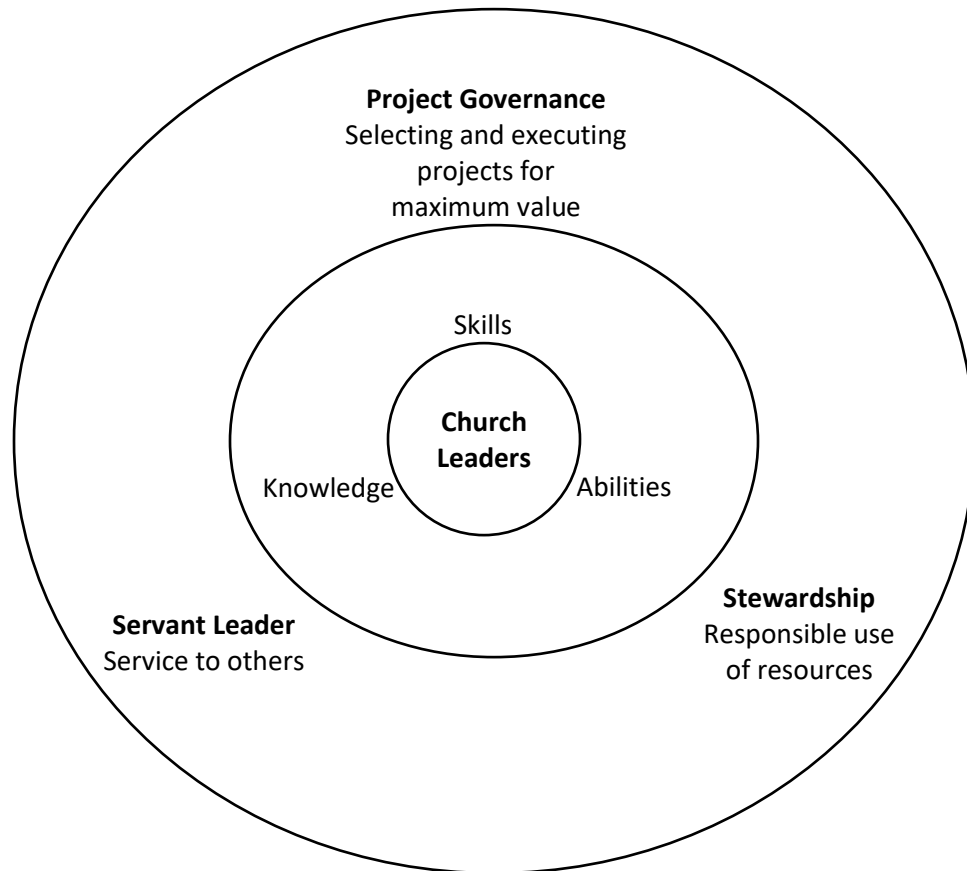
**RQ4c.** What project management abilities affect how local church leaders in Virginia, Mississippi, and Texas develop and lead project teams to accomplish unique events or special operations?



## Conceptual Framework

**Figure 1**

*Relationships Between Concepts*



Data analysis of qualitative research requires a systematic process, using a system of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs, and theories that support and inform the research (Mayer, 2015). The conceptual framework helps establish the rationale for the research and identify the ideas from the literature that are under analysis. In this qualitative case study, the conceptual framework focuses the concepts of servant leadership, steward leadership, and project governance in guiding the management of organizations by church leaders.

### *Servant Leadership*

The first concept underpinning this research project is servant leadership theory. A leader using this strategy places a higher priority on meeting other people's needs and fully developing them as a person (Thompson, 2015). Through participative leadership, the servant leader will empower his or her followers to accomplish an objective. The theory's originator, Robert K. Greenleaf, advocated that a leader's primary motivation and role should be service to others, holistic approach to work, promoting a sense of community, and sharing of power in decision-making (Eva et al., 2018). Servant leadership theory aligns with the objectives of church leaders who seek to guide their congregations toward a better relationship with God and a righteous life.

As servant leaders, church leaders will model serving others as their highest priority for accomplishing the objectives of the organization (Thompson, 2015). One strategy for accomplishing this goal is for the leader to control his or her own desire for power. Leaders of religious organizations are in power positions, as they lead and control a congregation (Allen et al., 2018). The servant leader will exercise this position to foster greatness in others instead of seeking self-interested desires. Servant leadership upholds the value of the individual and the power of community. Encouraging every person to strive to be the best, professionally and personally, promotes the importance of the individual in helping the organization accomplish its mission (Allen et al., 2018). While establishing the importance of the individual, the servant leader will also establish a sense of community. This servant leadership depends on defining groups of individuals who are jointly liable for each other and to the organization for the accomplishment of objectives (Eva et al., 2018).

The final tenet of servant leadership is that leaders must lessening their pride in themselves because of their positions. Servant leaders understand their best ability is to cultivate

others for leadership. A successful organization will have a leader who nurtures, participates, empowers, and encourages the talents of his or her followers (Lee et al., 2020). Aligning with the teachings of Jesus, the core characteristics of the servant leader who accomplishes these tasks are listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, and stewardship (Thompson, 2015). The present study identifies and examines the servant leadership theory as it is applied by church leaders in directing their organizations.

### ***Stewardship Theory***

Aligning decisions and actions to accomplish the objectives in the best interest of the organization, stewards emphasize collectivist opportunities above self-serving alternatives. Responsible stewards behave properly and perform ethically on the presumption that maximizing the establishment's performance will benefit them. The developers of the theory, Davis, Schoorman, and Donaldson (1997), distinguish stewardship from other leadership concepts by its differing assumptions across two broad dimensions: psychological factors and situational factors (Mathias et al., 2017).

**Psychological Factors.** This dimension of stewardship theory comprises three factors: motivation, identification, and power. Aligning with McClelland's high need for association and McGregor's Theory Y of human behavior (as cited in Hayek et al., 2015), stewards work toward achieving a shared organizational vision from intrinsic motivation. This shared importance of accomplishment reflects a need for organizational success that is of a higher order than the drive for individual achievement (Mathias et al., 2017). The identification factor manifests in managers defining themselves through membership of the organization by acceptance of its mission statement, vision statement, and business objectives. Developing trust, stewards draw personal power from performing as referents and experts with stakeholders internal and external

to the organization (Mathias et al., 2017). With this principle-manager relationship, the steward actively engages with internal stakeholders for better performance (Dominguez-Escrig et al., 2019).

**Situational Factors.** Within the situational dimension, Davis et al. (1997) distinguish stewardship by its culture and management philosophies. Stewards will seek to establish a collectivist culture, placing value on cohesion among the individuals of the organization (Hayek et al., 2015). They believe building relationships and establishing interconnectedness within the organization's culture lead to optimum organizational performance. Implementing a collectivist culture requires managers to be highly committed to the stewardship philosophy (Hayek et al., 2015). This approach requires the steward to communicate openly, empower, and establish trust with subordinates. Managerial involvement with the workers leads to performance improvement and growth opportunities (Nijhof et al., 2019). Stewards achieve their full potential and self-actualization through organizational achievement.

### ***Project Governance***

Governance encompasses the structure and relationships that determine the performance and direction of the organization; it is the control mechanism that ensures managers are performing in the best interests of the organization and accountable to the shareholders (Simard et al., 2018). There are various governance mechanisms within the construct of operations and administrative functions that organization may select and deploy. Project governance focus means analyzing the existence of projects and defining the administrative issues and complex transactions to identify the appropriate governing mechanisms (Danwitz, 2018).

A subcategory of project management, project governance connects with other internal mechanisms to ensure projects accomplish organizational goals. The governance framework is

predicated on three dimensions: legitimacy, accountability, and efficiency (Brunet & Aubry, 2016). These dimensions guide the two categories of project governance in an organization: project portfolio management and project internal processes (Volden & Andersen, 2018).

A critical management framework, project governance provides guidance and decision-making tools for the selection and implementation of projects. When deciding what projects are executable for an organization, management will use governance structures to ensure that the chosen projects align with the strategic objectives of the organization (Volden & Andersen, 2018). The decision to execute a given project is important for organizations with limited resources and funding. The accountability dimension maximizes the value of the project portfolio by having management act transparently, fairly, and equitably during project selection (Derakhshan et al., 2019). Accountability ensures the project portfolio will use the organization's resources in appropriate and equitable ways.

Project governance creates a culture within an organization, providing purpose and structure for the unique operation or event (Müller et al., 2016). An organizational culture that supports project planning and execution creates value for the organization. A fundamental issue within the project community is the lack of relationships and continuity among partners executing these temporary tasks (Ligthart et al., 2016). The project governance framework mitigates this problem by aligning the activities and decision-making process of project managers and team members. Implementing project governance establishes accountability within the project team (Derakhshan et al., 2019). A dysfunctional project team will be characterized by absence of trust, conflict, lack of commitment, and inattention to results. The establishment of accountability among the project team can mitigate these negative traits by actively engaging

each member with transparent discussions and decision-making according to the project governance structure (Derakhsham et al., 2019).

### ***Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities***

In secular organizations, it is expected that project managers will have the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to manage projects and help their organizations achieve their business objectives (Mazzetto, 2019). Church leaders who act as project managers require similar knowledge, skills, and abilities to manage the unique events or special operations of their religious institutions. The current literature defines the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for successful project management.

**Knowledge.** The selection and execution of projects that align with organizational objectives require general and specific management knowledge. In a study of project management programs at education institutions, Nguyen et al. (2016) identified the core concepts of instruction as project risk, cost, and time management. They further posited that knowledge of communications and human resource management are vital knowledge areas. In another study, Niazi et al. (2016) concluded that the keys to project success included knowledge in the areas of integration, scope, time, cost, quality, human resources, risk, procurement, and stakeholders.

**Skills.** Project management skills are influential in the execution of unique operations and events to accomplish business objectives. Research indicates that communication is an important skill for project managers (Ziek & Andersen, 2015). Effective communication practices create dialogue and team management, leading to project success. Sankaran (2018) concluded from a qualitative study that negotiation is an essential skill for project managers because it helps project managers build trust with stakeholders and select effective teams. Research also shows that leadership skills are necessary for managing projects (Mazzetto, 2019).

Hartono et al. (2019) identified the leadership skills leading to project success as intelligence quotient, emotional intelligence, and moral intelligence.

**Abilities.** Project management require managers to exercise certain abilities to successfully execute these unique events or special operations. Furukawa (1986) identified problem-solving as a necessary ability for project managers; this ability will help managers resolve stakeholder disagreements as well as conflicts over resources and time management. Another ability for project managers is decision-making. Managing projects requires analyzing quantitative and qualitative factors to develop optimal probable options for maximizing the value of the project (Mardani et al., 2015). Hidalgo and Morell (2019) singled out strategic planning as an ability helping project managers organize multiple projects.

The current study explores the connections among the concepts of servant leadership, stewardship, and project governance in developing the knowledge, skills, and abilities of church leaders to manage unique events or special operations.

**Discussion of Relationships Between Concepts.** The study will provide insight into how church leaders who guide religious institutions will execute unique events or special operations by interconnecting the concepts of servant leadership, stewardship, and project governance. The current literature establishes that a leader who is performing as a servant leader, acting as a steward, or using project governance is having positive experiences selecting and executing projects (Blixt & Kirytopoulos, 2017; Joslin & Muller, 2016; Krog & Govender, 2015). The relationships among the concepts will establish a framework to guide the process for church leaders to acquire the knowledge, skills, and abilities to manage unique operations or events (Figure 1); their management of such projects will create value for the organization and its stakeholders.

### ***Summary of the Conceptual Framework***

The conceptual framework establishes the structure guiding the research. For this project, the three main elements are servant leadership, stewardship theory, and project governance. The purpose of this research is to determine if the interrelationships among these concepts influence the performance of church leaders as they manage unique events or special operations.

### **Definition of Terms**

*Abilities:* The capacity to apply simultaneous knowledge and skills to perform, function, or behave to complete job tasks (Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures, 1978).

*Business strategy:* An organization's action plan to fulfill its vision, accomplish its mission, and achieve its organizational goals, detailing performance and expectations of employees (Gray & Larson, 2018).

*Church:* An organization with a distinct legal existence, established a place of worship providing public service activities. These organizations contribute to the wellbeing of the community with their normal business activities, and operations are similar to secular entities (Zelinsky, 2017).

*Church leader:* A person or member of the congregation considered spiritually gifted to preside over and provide guidance in serving God by following Christ. A church leader also makes decisions concerning the business activities and operations of the religious institution. People in these positions may be selected by the congregation, or may volunteer; they may or may not be monetarily compensated for their performance, and normally hold titles of pastor, elder, deacon, or staff member (Reed & Ferrari, 2017; Strunk et al., 2017; Tkaczynski et al., 2016).



*Knowledge:* The bodies of information of a factual or procedural nature that an employee will gain and apply for the performance of work functions (Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures, 1978).

*Not for profit:* An organization aligning with the federal statute 501(c)(3) that is tax-exempt formed for religious, charitable, literary, artistic, scientific, or educational purposes (Zelinsky, 2017).

*Organizational goals:* Detailed in the business strategy, these objectives are strategic, tactical, and operational in nature; they outline expectations for management and provide guidance for employee behavior (Gray & Larson, 2018).

*Project:* A temporary or unique event or operation with specific requirements (i.e., a precise scope, timeline, resources, and risk) that helps an organization accomplish its business strategy (Gray & Larson, 2018).

*Project governance:* A concept establishing a structure to guide the decisions of stakeholders for success of the project (Derakhshan et al., 2019).

*Project management:* The application of knowledge, skills, and abilities for initiating, planning, executing, monitoring, and evaluating the activities and people involved in a project, to ensure the project accomplishes its specific objectives (Gray & Larson, 2018).

*Project manager:* A member of the organization responsible for initiating, planning, executing, monitoring, and closing the project. This person will oversee the resources, manage the budget, supervise the team, and communicate with stakeholders for the duration of the project (Gray & Larson, 2018).

*Skills:* Measurable and observable proficiencies, technical or manual, an employee will learn or acquire through training (Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures, 1978).

*Servant leadership*: A concept for leadership wherein the leader's performance is guided by the desire to inspire, guide, encourage, and serve his or her followers by building supportive relationships, in alignment with teachings of Jesus Christ (Eva et al., 2018).

*Stewardship*: A concept for leadership whereby a manager performs his or her duties to promote the best interests of the organization, assuming responsibility for the assets and resources under his or her control (Mathias et al., 2017).

### **Assumptions, Limitations, Delimitations**

This section discusses the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations influencing the inferences of this research project. In a qualitative case study, assumptions are aspects of the study that any person reading the project will assume are true given the population and research design (Pyrszak & Bruce, 2014). Identifiable, potential weaknesses of the project, mostly not controllable by the researcher, limit the study. These limitations, if not reasonably dismissed, can influence the research methods and conclusions of the project (Pyrszak & Bruce, 2014). Delimitations are factors establishing boundaries for the study; controllable by the researcher, these restrictions define scope of the project (Pyrszak & Bruce, 2014). Establishing and communicating the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations improves the understanding of the study for readers (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

#### ***Assumptions***

Assumptions are factors that are considered as valid by the researcher when designing a qualitative inquiry, which are then conveyed to the readers (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A common assumption within qualitative research is the honesty and truthfulness of participants' response to the surveys and questionnaires (Aguinis & Solarino, 2019; Toews et al., 2016). Another assumption is the openness and integrity of the participants, and the presumption that they will

provide relevant answers to the interviewer during the interview process (Kvale, 2016). These assumptions require the researcher to convey that each participant is a church leader of an organization in southeastern Virginia.

### ***Limitations***

Qualitative case studies have inherent weaknesses that the researcher must identify to help readers connect the study with findings. The first limitation in the present study is the small sample size (Creswell & Poth, 2018)—only 30 participants. This limitation arose from the researcher's choice to restrict the study to Baptist church leaders in southeastern Virginia. Sampling of participants until data saturation occurs will mitigate this limitation (Fusch & Ness, 2015). A second limitation of this study is the homogeneity of the participants, all of whom are Baptist church leaders. This limits the generalizability of the findings to other Christian denominations because of differences among the training and selection of church leaders. The research will provide in-depth narratives of Baptist church leaders, contributing to the body of literature of church leaders, particularly in southeastern Virginia.

Another limitation in qualitative case studies is researcher bias. This limitation occurs when the researcher's personal values, experiences, and assumptions influence data collection and analysis (Yin, 2018). Literature suggests bias can also influence participants' response to questionnaires and during interviews (Galdas, 2017; Noble & Smith, 2015). Bracketing techniques—that is, the practice of the researcher gaining an understanding of his assumptions and understandings toward the study—will mitigate bias limitation (Collins & Stockton, 2018; Dempsey et al., 2016).

***Delimitations***

In this section, the researcher establishes the boundaries of the case study. The primary focus of the study is leaders of religious institutions who have experience managing unique operations or events. These projects are significant in supporting the organization's goals and furthering its mission. The participants may or may not possess the knowledge, skills, and abilities relevant to project management.

**Significance of the Study**

The significance of this case study lies in revealing the potential effect of project management on improving the performance of church leaders as they manage unique events or special operations. The implications of the study indicate that project management improves the performance of nonprofit organizations, therefore enhancing their efficiency (Kao, 2018). This research sought to expand the scope of Kao's research with a focus on project management in religious organizations in Virginia, Mississippi, and Texas. An integral element of management is aligning the aims of chosen projects with the organizational strategy for allocation of resources and achievement of strategic objectives (Ansari et al., 2015; Söderlund & Sydow, 2019). Using the findings of this study, church leaders can gain an understanding of how the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to manage unique events or special operations can also help the church in accomplishing its larger mission. Improving the leaders' performance in project management will thus create value for religious organizations. This research will also help church leaders understand project failure or nonalignment with organizational objectives.

***Reduction of Gaps***

The purpose of this study is to contribute to the body of literature on the performance of church leaders in managing unique events or special operations. Current research has shown

widespread deficiencies in project leadership among managers of nonprofit organizations, including religious institutions (e.g., Kao, 2018; Khorin et al., 2018; Zhai et al., 2017). Church leaders often lack the knowledge, skills, and ability to manage unique events or special operations (Cierva et al., 2016; Krispin, 2017; Pratt et al., 2019; Tkaczynski et al., 2016). This study serves to establish the importance of church leaders' acquisition of the knowledge, skills, and abilities of project management so as to better manage unique events and special operations for alignment with organization's goals.

### ***Implications for Biblical Integration***

Church leaders are responsible for both the religious and business activities of their organizations. When these leaders lack managerial competencies, their managerial approach creates issues for the religious institution (Gottschalk, 2017). The focus of this research project is on church leaders who lack the knowledge, skills, and abilities to manage unique events and special operations. A church leader who fails to pursue opportunities to improve his or her management knowledge, skills, and abilities is not performing as biblically inspired manner (Keller & Alsdorf, 2012). Common projects of the sort that a church will execute have parallels with examples of project management in the Bible.

A major project demonstrating the knowledge, skills, and abilities of a manager to execute God's plan is Nehemiah's leadership in the efforts to rebuild Jerusalem. As an exile serving King Artaxerxes, Nehemiah was in a position to influence and observe, granting him access to information concerning the kingdom and its people (Neh. 2:1–3, *New International Version*). Learning of the hardships the exiles faced upon returning to Jerusalem, Nehemiah developed a plan to lead the construction project (Neh. 1:1–4). His plan for accomplishing this

significant goal aligned with the project phases defined by the PMI: initiation, planning, execution, monitoring and control, and closure.

In the first chapter of Nehemiah, the project is initiated by Nehemiah's a prayer to God. In the following chapter, he presents the project to Artaxerxes, demonstrating how the project manager receives resources from external stakeholders for project execution. During the presentation, Nehemiah provides a plan detailing the timeline, project scope, and the resources needed for success. Project execution starts in chapter 3, with Nehemiah revising the plan after his arrival in Jerusalem. During the process, Nehemiah overcomes obstacles and work stoppages, demonstrating the project management knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for monitoring and control of the project (Neh. 3–6). For the final phase, Nehemiah closes the project, assigning Hanani and Hanaiah the governor the charge of maintaining the wall (Neh. 7:2). Nehemiah's story thus shows a project manager, led by God, using his knowledge, skills, and abilities to accomplish a strategic outcome.

Another biblical personage who executed a project in accordance with PMI project phases is King Solomon, in his construction of the temple (1 Kings 5–6). After coming to power, Solomon built the temple following the guidance of God. Solomon's obedience of and alignment with God's plan led to peace and fortune for Israel (1 Kings 10:14–29). The construction of the temple required significant knowledge, skills, and abilities in project management.

Local churches execute projects when performing missions within the community. Jesus provides guidance to church leaders for managing these unique events and operations (Mark 6). One element of project management Jesus has established is the concept of a team. When he deployed followers, they were sent as teams for project execution (Luke 10:1; Mark 10:6–7). Another project management concept Jesus demonstrates during mission assignment is

equipping his disciples with the resources and tools for project execution; for instance, in Mark 10:7 Jesus gives them the authority to drive out impure spirits and heal disease and sickness. The execution of projects allows the local church to accomplish its objectives.

### ***Relationship to Field of Study***

Project management connects the concepts of servant leadership, stewardship, and project governance for church leaders who assume roles of both spiritual guide and business manager of their organizations. These differing roles create tension for church leaders who seek to be servants while performing as disciplined business leaders (Thompson, 2015). In a study, Ahmed and Anantatmula (2017) confirmed that leaders who practice the leadership competencies of project management tend to lead high-performing projects; leadership competencies that align with the concepts of servant leadership and project governance had a high level of influence on the performance of the project manager.

Another connection between the discipline of project management and the conceptual framework of this study lies in establishing internal controls to manage the resources of an organization. In religious organizations, fraud and embezzlement may occur because church leaders lack the knowledge, skills, and abilities to account for financial resources (McAllum, 2018; Thornhill et al., 2016; Zurlo et al., 2020). During project execution, church leaders may have difficulties managing human resources, causing issues with the congregation (Gazzola & Ameio, 2015; Harrison et al., 2017). Implementing project management practices into their leadership practices can help church leaders improve their performance in these areas. Kanwai et al. (2017) concluded that the positive effects of proper project management practices improve human resource commitment and project performance. In recent years, Project Management Institution and other governing agencies have implemented changes to the standards of project

management to emphasize the importance of resource management (Mikkelsen & Riis, 2017).

The interconnected elements of this study's conceptual framework link the importance of project management to the performance of church leaders in guiding their organizations.

### ***Summary of the Significance of the Study***

The aim of this qualitative case study is to analyze the importance of the knowledge, skills, and abilities related to project management for church leaders as they manage unique events or special operations. An analysis of the participants' knowledge, skills, and abilities in project management will identify common issues among church leaders in Virginia, Mississippi, and Texas. Identifying managerial shortcomings in project management can lead to improvement opportunities for church leaders in the area of management. This case study contributes to the body of knowledge by integrating biblical precepts with the conceptual framework of project management.

### **A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature**

This review of the literature explores previous research on the topic of church leaders managing the business operations of their institutions. This section examines research concerning church leaders and churches. In addition, the literature review examines research on the performance of church leaders in their roles as servant leaders and stewards. Gathering information for these topics required the search of the databases of the Jerry Falwell Library, Google Scholar, ProQuest, and the Bible; keywords included the phrases *church leaders*, *religious leaders*, *religious organizations*, *servant leader*, and *stewardship*.

There is a vast body of knowledge on these subjects, but limited research exploring the managerial practices of church leaders. The scarcity of information relevant to the performance of church leaders as business managers underlines the significance of the present study and its



contribution to the literature; even less research exists on the specific topic of how project management competencies can assist church leaders in the performance of their duties as managers.

This literature review also includes studies of project management and its influence in a general sense—that is, in non-church settings—in both nonprofit and profit organizations. This information was retrieved by querying the abovementioned databases with the terms *project*, *project management*, and *nonprofit organizations*. In this way, the analysis of the literature establishes the conceptual framework, connecting the concepts of servant leadership, stewardship, and project governance. A summary of the literature review forms the foundation for this research.

### ***Church Leaders***

Religious organizations' selection process for leaders and managers differs from that of secular companies and for-profit business entities. A major difference, for most faith-based entities, is that congregations recognize leaders as spiritually gifted to preside over the spiritual development of the membership and provide guidance on following their identified spiritual being (Krishnakumar et al., 2015; Vann, 2015). In Christian organizations, church leaders provide direction for the congregation in following the way of God through the life of Jesus Christ (Breed, 2015; Hill, 2016).

**Calling.** To provide spiritual guidance for an organization, the religious leader must profess a calling. Dik and Duffy (2009) defined the calling as “a transcendent summons [to] approaching a particular role in life in a manner oriented towards demonstrating or deriving a sense of purpose or meaningfulness that holds other-oriented values and goals as primary sources of motivation” (p. 427). After observing and conducting in-depth interviews of 115 ministers and

ministry aspirants in the Church of God in Christ, Pitt (2012) defined the calling as a vertical interaction with God leading a person toward a specific occupation. Jesus defined requirements for church leaders of Christian organizations in John 5:30: “I can do nothing on my own initiative. As I hear, I judge, and my judgement is just because I do not seek my own will, but the will of him who sent me.” During the selection process, a person’s professing his or her calling to ministry is a requirement for Christian organizations (Pitt, 2012); however, the literature also indicates the importance for church leaders of other leadership attributes (Pedersen et al., 2018; Reed & Ferrari, 2017; White & Acheampong, 2017).

**Strategy and Vision.** One vital leadership attribute for church leaders is the ability to develop and implement a strategy for the organization to accomplish its mission (Breed, 2019; Eguizabal, 2018; White & Acheampong, 2017). During strategy development, church leaders must be aware of both internal and external factors that influence the organization’s performance (Berenguer & Shen, 2019; Brown, 2017; Miller, 2019). Common internal factors for religious organizations include financial resources, human resources, physical resources, and current operations (Chaves & Eagle, 2016; Munday et al., 2019; Thiessen et al., 2018). External forces that must be considered during strategy development include the regulatory and technological environments and developments influencing the population (Djupe et al., 2018; Dougherty & Emerson, 2018; Joubert & Schoeman, 2015). One vital leadership task is developing a breakthrough strategy to guide the actions and behaviors of the church’s internal and external stakeholders, focusing on vision and mission accomplishment (Yip & Ainsworth, 2015).

A vision helps the leader anticipate the effects of the internal factors and external forces that influence the organization’s pursuit of its mission (White & Acheampong, 2017). The purpose of developing a vision is to identify the church’s objectives and the roadmap for

achieving them. With a vision and strategy, church leaders create opportunities for accomplishing the mission. In a study that compared growing and declining churches, Thiessen et al. (2018) found that growing churches were more likely to have clear vision and mission statements. Breed (2019) likewise concluded that successful strategies require church leaders to communicate and share their visions; doing so leads to a more effective performance by the congregation in accomplishing the mission of the organization.

Church leaders must also consider changes in the population makeup of their congregations. Eguizabal (2018) explored the significant growth and influence of the Latino population in the Protestant community in the United States, yielding insights on improving the performance of church leaders ministering this population dynamic by utilizing specific management practices: diversifying Sunday worship services, implementing Sunday school, promoting Bible study, and emphasizing prayer

Several biblical leaders emphasize the importance of vision and strategy. In Jeremiah 29:11, God describes how a person should develop a strategy for the future that encompasses hope. Solomon wrote in Proverbs 21:5, “The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance, but everyone who is hasty comes only to poverty.” With the changes occurring in the operating environment of the church, leaders who follow the guidance of this verse will develop a strategy for growth of their ministries. For the church leader, vision and planning must include God’s vision. Proverbs 16:3 states, “Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established.” Church leaders creating a quality, coherent vision will successfully guide their organizations with a functional strategy.

**Innovation.** A third trait of significance to church leaders is innovation. A faith-based organization with an innovative leader will perform with an intrinsic motivation and initiative

(Harrison, 2019). Innovation allows the church leader to view the challenges facing the organization as opportunities to accomplish the vision and mission. Harrison (2019) posited that as the church undertakes a process of renewal, the shifting approaches and practices require a leader with innovative views—one who can leverage population changes in the congregation to further the goals of the church.

Religious leaders who implement innovative practices are more likely to accomplish their organizational missions. A quantitative study by Lee (2019), for instance, showed that innovative social media activity helps churches establish positive social and political community support. In another study, churches in the UK used social media for brand building, establishing the church community, outreach programs, and developing their spiritual missions (Sircar & Rowley, 2020). In the Catholic Church, we see Pope Francis using innovative leadership practices of structural reconstruction to overcome the resistance of traditionalists (Auvinen-Pontinen, 2015; Brundell, 2016; Regan, 2019). An innovative approach, in short, can help church leaders guide their organizations toward the accomplishment of the mission.

**Resilience.** Issues and adversities will arise from the changes occurring within the operating environment and community of and church. Religious organizations need resilient leaders who can adjust to the dynamics of volatile and ambiguous environments, providing guidance to the congregation (Strunk et al., 2017). With a strong appreciation of self, a church leader with resiliency will remain calm in turmoil, providing a strong support system for members of the religious entity (Knox, 2019). Francis (2019) identified resilience as occurring naturally in leaders through their spiritual development and experience. Support from the church community and mentors builds resilience through life's adversities. Doehring (2015)

characterized resilience as developing from caregiving relationships, noting that it helps people spiritually integrate moral stress.

When communities experience negative events, resilient church leaders providing spiritual support create environments for recovery. Cherry et al. (2018) conducted a quantitative study of long-term consequences for survivors of Hurricane Katrina, Hurricane Rita, and the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill, finding that spiritual support is a significant factor as a coping mechanism during recovery. A study of middle-aged Vietnamese-born immigrants to the U.S. suggested that spirituality and religious faith help with stress management (Le et al., 2019). An integral characteristic, resilience helps church leaders guide their congregations to achieve organizational goals.

**Conflict Management.** The church leader is responsible for establishing unity within the organization, uniting the beliefs and behaviors of patrons of different cultures, worldviews, and theological positions (Dunaetz, 2019). In a qualitative grounded theory study, Matshobane and Masango (2018) identified five sources of conflict among the pastors, elders, and congregation of a Pentecostal church in South Africa: polity, socioeconomic capacity, lack of education, incompetent leadership, and immature leadership. In another grounded theory methodology approach, Joynt (2018) identified miscommunication, congregational favoritism, and leadership issues as conflict sources that drive ministers to abandon their vocation.

Resolving conflicts so as to create opportunities requires church leaders to employ conflict management skills (Dunaetz, 2019). An integral element of this leadership attribute is the willingness to engage these opportunities and leverage them for growth between stakeholders (Knox, 2019). Matshobane and Masango (2018) concluded that conflict management should be a major element in the education of aspiring ministers to better prepare them for service. Byerly

and Byerly (2019), in an interdisciplinary study, proposed that church leaders should focus on developing two collective characteristics in their congregations, inclusiveness and reconciliation, so as to help resolve conflict and lead the organization toward fulfillment of its mission. By practicing conflict management, the church leader will consistently build solid relationships of trust and respect among the congregation and attendees, thus leading to success of the mission.

**Communication.** Effective communication is essential for persons in positions of church leadership (Cierva et al., 2016; Penrose, 2015). One element of communication is public speaking; a church leader speaks in a variety of settings, providing guidance and counseling to the congregation. Clear and consistent messaging will engage and inspire the congregation during speaking and teaching activities (Snook, 2019).

Within the church, the most common method of communicating the organization's vision is the sermon (Penrose, 2015). Sermons are communication methods for pastors to teach and convey spiritual guidance to the congregation (Cierva et al., 2016). Freeburg and Roland (2015) conducted a qualitative inquiry concluding that an important element of sermons is communication of spiritual goals and information concerning the Bible. Snook (2019), too, noted that preaching is an element of communication process. The most common occasions for effective pastoral communication—personal conversations, hospital visits, teaching in a small-group setting—present opportunities to develop relationships while being a visible representation of Christ. Immersing themselves with the congregation allows church leaders to develop innovative methods of communication.

As religious organizations become more diverse, church leaders will increasingly encounter people with special needs, which will pose challenges in communication. In a case study using action research, Shea (2019) examined church leaders' methods for engaging with

people with a significant intellectual disability. The skill to communicate with (and provide spiritual guidance to) every individual is an important attribute for church leaders. A qualitative study of an inclusive dormitory environment for students attending church leadership school demonstrated the importance of developing diverse communicating skills (Finn & Utting, 2017); the nondisabled students felt living in the inclusive environment better prepared them for real-world opportunities of leading congregations.

Digital communication is of growing importance, with religious institutions increasing their footprints on social media (Hudgins, 2019; Nysten & Holmstrom, 2019). Checketts (2018) reviewed the positive and negative implications of church leaders' activity on social media and found that many church leaders use these platforms to disclose their personal lives to their congregations. Managing their personal social media presences to align with the mission of the church helps them use the platforms as a communication tool. Lim (2017) suggested that social media improves communication by providing a two-way format; church leaders can engage with their congregations, as well as with non-attendees of a given religious institution, to lead devotions and offer spiritual guidance. Church leaders need to demonstrate the competency in developing written materials using multimedia platforms on computers, cellphones, and other media devices to communicate the vision and mission of their faith organizations.

### ***Categories of Church Leaders***

Multiple types of leadership positions exist within Christian organizations, providing services for the congregation and the wider community. Several of these positions align with biblical principles, requiring the holder to perform as a servant leader for the congregants and steward of the resources of the church. Among these positions of leadership with biblical foundations are elders (also called pastors) and deacons.

**Pastors (Elders).** The New Testament describes pastors as the primary administrators of the church (1 Cor. 4:1; Rom. 12:7–8; 1 Tim. 1:11). Several scripture passages describe the role of the elder as overseer and shepherd of the church (Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Pet. 5:1–4). The pastor educates the congregation about God’s word and ministers to the needs of the congregants with biblical guidance (1 Tim. 5:17; 1 Pet. 5:1; Titus 1:5–9; Heb. 13:7). Governing the congregation, elders lead the actions of the church and guide the behaviors of the congregation for alignment with God’s word.

**Deacons.** Deacons have a ministry to serve members of the congregation (Ferrari & Vaclavak, 2016). The primary objective of these appointees is to oversee the physical well-being of congregants while the pastor oversees the spiritual (Acts 6:1–6). In theological study, O’Donnell (2017) categorized the duties of deacons as church leaders as functional, relational, and sacramental—that is, representing Jesus Christ. Deacons also help the pastor in guiding the church toward its mission. The position of deacon is founded in scripture; the apostles appointed helpers to ministers to help care for the congregation (Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:1–13).

Recent literature has emphasized the need to improve the education and development of church leaders (Foohey, 2015; Krispin, 2017; McAllum, 2018). For example, Masenya and Booyse (2016), studying congregations in South Africa, advocated for formal management training for individuals as a precondition for employment as church leaders. Similarly, Kessler and Kretzschmar (2015) identified the many roles that Christian leaders perform in an organization and affirmed their need for leadership and professional development.

### ***Personal Development of Church Leaders***

A common theme in the literature is the importance of professional development of church leaders to improve their performance of their duties and responsibilities. Church leaders



play multiple roles that require continuous growth: spiritual leader, theological teacher, counselor, and business manager (Gin et al., 2019; Helsel, 2017; Plastow, 2018). In performing these roles, the church leader provides direction and guidance to congregants, nurturing their spiritual lives and connection with God.

Church leaders have several avenues for growth opportunities as lifelong learners, particularly in developing the competencies of leadership. The primary motivation for investing in leadership development is the link between the learning experience and improved work performance. A multidimensional strategy combining formal and informal methods of learning and development is highly effective for leadership competency acquisition in church leaders (Guthrie, 2015; Oliver, 2018). Oliver (2018) found that blended learning consisting of formal and informal methods allowed students to receive instruction from relevant and sufficient sources. In a qualitative study, Carlsten and Olsen (2019) interviewed pastors about their participation in professional learning and found that blending formal and informal learning methods promoted participation in learning programs. As they seek to guide their organizations toward mission accomplishment, church leaders can improve their own performance through a mix of learning opportunities.

### ***Formal Learning***

One dimension of the strategy for developing as a church leader is with formal learning. This systematic intentional approach requires a learning environment, with planning and guidance from instructors or trainers (Kwok-Wing & Smith, 2018). Interaction between students and teachers can occur face-to-face or on an online learning platform (Gin et al., 2019). In a formal learning environment, the learning institution or organization controls the content and learning materials. The structure of the formal learning environment contributes to church

leaders developing the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to manage an organization (Park & Choi, 2016). In a case study, Neil (2015) found that a formal training program led three participants to acknowledge their calling, develop the confidence to lead an organization, and commit to a lifelong journey in faith and Christian discipleship. Formal training venues for church leaders include seminaries, colleges and universities, and organizational training programs.

**Seminary.** The literature identifies seminary as a common option for leadership training for church leaders (Ferguson, 2015; Gin et al., 2019; Taylor, 2018). The primary mission of these educational institutions is to offer advanced training for students seeking careers in ministry-related or church professions. Existing among the different religions and denominations of Christian churches, seminaries have similar objectives in training religious leaders:

- Express their personal commitment to the spiritual being of their religion, following the guidance of the institution's doctrine (Birkett, 2019; Lee, 2019).
- Demonstrate a body of knowledge of the doctrine guiding the practices of the entity (Birkett, 2019; Lee, 2019).
- Develop the knowledge, skills, and abilities to lead consistent services and meetings, inspiring the attendees of the faith-based organization with their leadership presence (Taylor, 2018; Oliver, 2019).
- Integrate spiritual grounding in conversations, actions, and behaviors, with the end goal of the congregation viewing the leader as spiritually authentic and faithful (Birkett, 2019; Lee, 2019).

- Establish the person as an excellent communicator; develop his or her active listening ability and teach him or her public speaking and media communication skills (Helsel, 2017; Oliver, 2019).
- Create a learning environment for the congregation, designing messages and providing opportunities to provide guidance of the doctrine, concepts, and theology of the organization (Gin et al., 2019; Oliver, 2019).
- Inspire the person to become a lifelong learner of the doctrine of the religious institution, gaining experience from life events (Birkett, 2019).

In summary, seminaries prepare church leaders to provide spiritual guidance to religious organizations.

**Bible College and Graduate School.** Students who seeking to become church leaders but still desire to pursue other career options may select a Bible college (Richardson, 2019). These higher learning institutions offer undergraduate programs in various disciplines integrating spiritual teachings into the curriculum (Davignon & Thomson Jr., 2015). Bible schools offer courses and degrees in Christian leadership either as a specific discipline or as a transdisciplinary program (Kessler & Kretzschmar, 2015). Many Bible colleges offer graduate-level education, providing students an opportunity to further their studies (Pitts, 2016). Attending a Christian college allows students to integrate higher learning with Christian practices.

Christian universities contribute to the training and development of church leaders (Ostrander, 2018). Dockery (2019) identified four common characteristics of these institutions: connection to a church, evangelical vision for higher education, focus on students, and community. In a mixed-methods research study of Christian universities in Ghana, White and Afrane (2017) concluded that Christian churches should have Christ-centered programs focusing

on evangelism and discipleship; employ Christian staff; implement monthly devotional and prayer services; and implementing a vision of Christianity among their leadership. Integrating higher learning with Christian practices can prepare students for church leadership and other career opportunities.

Christian universities are formal learning institutions, preparing students for careers while developing them as Christians. Haarsma et al. (2019) detailed a framework for leaders of Christian universities for mitigating the tensions experienced by students in the science field. A major component of the structure is to build trust among the students, faculty, and administrators, thus fostering a positive learning environment. In a quantitative study, Bird (2016) found that students attending Christian universities characterized their learning experiences as creating opportunities to become an adult. The religious environment contributes to this optimistic view; students receiving formal learning at seminaries and Christian universities are beginning the journey of developing their leadership competencies for guiding an organization.

**Mentoring and On-the-Job Training.** Another method for developing church leaders is a mentoring or training program within the religious institution (Chiroma & Cloete, 2015). Such preparation opportunities arise from the spiritual and location-dependent connections that senior church leaders share with members of their congregations (Hall, 2017). Designing and implementing these programs requires commitment, dedication, and establishment of specific goals, objectives, and expectations from each stakeholder (Dunlow, 2017). The literature suggests that mentoring programs should be developed according to the following precepts:

- Address various theologies, expanding the knowledge base of the trainee (Hall, 2017).

- Articulate the preparation and delivery of messages through sermons (van Beek, 2017).
- Instruct to develop best practices and for public presentation (Taylor, 2015).
- Develop the person as a leader (Hall, 2017).
- Emphasize the importance of—and encourage the pursuit of—continuing education (van Beek, 2017).

In a qualitative study, Chiroma and Cloete (2015) found that mentoring programs enhance the learning students receive from other formal education environments. Potgieter (2015) details the importance of pastors mentoring members of their religious organization to help provide counselling services to others. Developing the talents of others with training and mentoring can help the church serve the community with God's redemptive love. Smit (2015) concludes from a qualitative study that adequate mentoring is an essential element of the missional pastoral theory. In developing pastoral care using this concept, church leaders focus on exploring Christ and enabling others to live Christ-centered lives. Seminaries, Bible colleges, and mentoring all prepare pastors, deacons, and board members to provide spiritual guidance, teach, and lead congregations. The literature depicts many opportunities for church leaders to learn and develop from these formal learning programs.

**Informal Learning.** The strategy for developing as a church leader includes informal learning. This element of development integrates organization-led activities with the personal pursuit of knowledge away from structured environments (Kwok-Wing & Smith, 2018). The learner establishes the goals and objectives he or she will pursue in accordance with his or her personal learning style. An informal learning environment has benefits for the learner; it lowers stress, develops initiative, and encourages curiosity (Rogoff et al., 2016). Becker and Bish (2017)

suggested that managers prefer informal learning in developing management knowledge, skills, and abilities. Two methods of informal learning are knowledge management and coaching (Anand et al., 2015; Becker & Bish, 2017).

***Knowledge Management.*** One informal method of learning is knowledge management. The focus of this concept is an organization's enhancement of the use of knowledge for executing its mission and accomplishing objectives (Anand et al., 2015). Integrating knowledge management into the organization requires church leaders to understand where institutional knowledge resides, and to promote an environment conducive to sharing that information. Using this informal learning process, leaders can develop knowledge, skills, and abilities to provide spiritual guidance and manage business functions (Rogoff et al., 2016). Provitera and Ghasabeh (2017) identify two categories of knowledge that can be managed in this fashion:

- *Explicit knowledge:* Information within the organization that is measurable and codified. A person can obtain this knowledge from documents, software, instructions, models, business process and practices, and similar sources.
- *Tacit knowledge:* Not easily identifiable or captured within an organization, tacit knowledge exists within the minds of employees; it is the mastery and skills a person develops over time by performing his or her duties and job functions.

Distinguishing between these categories is an integral element of knowledge management. The integration of explicit and tacit knowledge leads to improvements in the activities and operations of an organization (Anand et al., 2015). After a qualitative inquiry, Freeburg (2018) stated that knowledge management is an asset within a church, while the loss of institutional knowledge can become a liability. For church leaders, aligning their interactions and

teachings with the precepts of Jesus Christ is an integral element in accomplishing the mission of the church.

***Coaching.*** Executive coaching is another method of informal learning that contributes to and assists in both the personal and professional development of business leaders (Rekalde et al., 2015). From a Christian perspective, Cawley and Snyder (2015) posited that executive coaching is a constructive function of God's grace, allowing leaders to develop the knowledge, skills, and abilities to direct flourishing organizations. Bergquist and Mura (2011) identified three approaches to executive coaching: behavioral, decisional, and aspirational.

***Behavioral.*** This approach focuses on developing visionary leaders who engage and empower people and groups from diverse backgrounds to improve performance to accomplish the organization's goals (Bergquist & Mura, 2011). Church leaders' behaviors are critical to the organization's effectiveness in executing its mission (Smit, 2015; Tkaczynski et al., 2016). In their duties and responsibilities, pastors, ministers, and deacons provide spiritual guidance and inspiration to their congregations (Hill, 2015). Behavioral coaching can help church leaders integrate leadership skills and abilities into their behaviors (Anthony, 2017). Qualitative study led Gaddis and Foster (2015) to conclude that leaders who fail to understand how their behaviors influence the performance of others will not help the organization achieve its vision.

***Decisional.*** The objective of this approach is to improve the decision-making process of church leaders (Bergquist & Mura, 2011). Decisional coaching comprises three models for the learning and development of leaders: reflective, instrumented, and observational. Reflective coaching requires the client to reflect internally about his or her decisions; during the reflection, the coach will gather information and help the client assess the decision by exploring alternative options (Kovacs & Corrie, 2017). Chiroma and Cloete (2015) contended that reflective coaching

is instrumental for the development of church leaders to provide spiritual guidance. The instrumented model, by contrast, sees the coach providing external information from multiple sources concerning a dilemma. The sources of the data may include questionnaires, surveys, or performance reports; supervisors, peers, and subordinates contribute to the multi-rater process, collaborating and improving the appraisals (Helsel, 2017). By using multiple instruments to report on the client's performance, the coach can develop focus areas for improvement. Finally, in the observational model for decisional coaching, the coach will shadow the client during real events to monitor his or her actions and decisions in real time (Corsby & Jones, 2020). John et al. (2018) suggested that observation-based decisional coaching aligns with biblical practices by prioritizing relationships for enhancing the ministry of the individual and institution. Improving the decisions of leaders can help an organization realize its vision and mission statements.

*Aspirational.* This coaching strategy focuses on driving behaviors that influence the character of the leader (Byrne et al., 2017). Aspirational coaching aims to help church leaders discover their values and their alignment with the organization. Aspirational coaching can emphasize either a career or spiritual focus (Bergquist & Mura, 2011).

An example of career coaching would be a leadership development model for succession planning; the objective is to help leaders embrace the challenges of guiding organizations at critical junctures in their career paths (Ling et al., 2018). Pratt et al. (2019) conducted a grounded theory study that identified a need for career coaching in religious organizations. In a case study, Tilstra et al. (2011) linked the development of church leaders with Jesus' interactions with his disciples, concluding that Jesus' method of career coaching his disciples can be applied to creatively develop Christian leaders for guiding religious organizations.



The spiritual model of aspirational coaching, by contrast, finds the coach helping the leader improve the quality of his or her work production through transcendent forces (Sholikhah et al., 2019); by developing an institutional base or ceremonial activities, the leader will discover a deeper purpose, longing, and joy in his or her work activities (Allen & Fry, 2019). Executive coaching can help church leaders integrate the business and spiritual components of their duties and responsibilities, improving their performance in all areas—as servant leaders, stewards, and business managers.

### ***Performance as Servant Leaders***

The church leader who performs as a servant leader seeks to deepen the congregation's understanding of God's words, and to establish an organization that cares for and serves those in need (Eva et al., 2018). Servant leaders consistently show certain characteristics in their behaviors and actions, creating an environment in which their congregants can grow (Thompson, 2015). These characteristics align with the traits necessary for church leaders to provide spiritual guidance for the congregation so as to further the mission of the organization.

- *Listening.* Receptive listening improves the communication skills of the pastor or deacon. By listening intently to the congregation's ideas, the servant leader identifies and clarifies opportunities to heighten performance within the organization and better serve the internal needs of members and the community (Mulinge, 2018; Song, 2018).
- *Empathy.* With patience and forbearance, the servant leader strives for understanding and acceptance of everyone. Church leaders assume that congregants are seeking to follow God's will; however, the imperfectly nature of people may cause failure to occur. With empathy, the leader will recognize

congregants as individuals, valuing the special and unique contribution each person makes to the church (Potter, 2018; Song, 2018).

- *Healing*. Church leaders persistently invest in building relationships with the congregation and community. When a person suffers from broken spirits and emotional hurts, damage will occur to the bonds between individual and community. A powerful force for transformation and integration, the healing characteristic of a servant leader provides an opportunity for the church leader to recognize and reestablish the relationship. Restoring the relationship improves the performance of the individual, furthering the church's mission (Mulinge, 2018; Song, 2018).
- *Awareness*. Performing as servant leaders, pastors and deacons seek to identify the internal factors and external forces that influence the polity of the church and community. This external awareness improves the decision-making process, providing solutions to improve the performance of the organization in accomplishing its mission. A servant leader also has an internal awareness of self, demonstrating strong and appropriate personal boundaries in relationships and behaviors (Mulinge, 2018; Song, 2018).
- *Persuasion*. Church leaders work to guide the behavior and actions of the congregation, aligning them with God's teaching. This natural orientation to convince others to follow his or her direction allows the church leader to achieve compliance without coercion. Persuasion is the clearest distinguishing element between servant leadership and a traditional authoritarian model (Mulinge, 2018; Song, 2018).

- *Conceptualization.* The characteristic of conceptualization allows the church leader to assess accurately the external forces and internal factors influencing the congregation and community. This assessment of the organization allows the leader to see beyond its day-to-day realities to develop a vision for accomplishing the mission of the church (Mulinge, 2018; Song, 2018).
- *Foresight.* This servant leader characteristic integrates intuition with conceptualization, enabling the leader to value wisdom gained from past lessons, appraise present realities, and consider effects of future actions and behaviors (Mulinge, 2018; Song, 2018).
- *Stewardship.* An effective servant leader will creatively use the resources of the organization, optimizing its performance in serving the community and accomplishing its mission (Mulinge, 2018; Song, 2018).
- *Building community.* Societal perceptions are shifting from local communities to larger institutions, creating a feeling of loss in people. Servant leaders will seek opportunities to build community within an institution to overcome this challenging issue. Church leaders with this characteristic, understanding how the congregation interconnects with its community, will formalize an organizational culture of policies and procedures for community building (Mulinge, 2018; Song, 2018).
- *Commitment to the growth of people.* Church leaders are responsible for the spiritual growth of their congregants, acting as overseer to guide their behaviors and actions. As servant leaders, pastors and deacons are intrinsically motivated to help others grow personally, professionally, and spiritually. As every individual

within the religious institution grows, the performance of the church as a whole improves towards achieving its mission (Potter, 2018; Song, 2018).

Performing as a servant leader aligns the church leader with biblical principles to provide both spiritual and business management for religious organizations. One method of performing as a servant leader is leading with humility. In a quantitative study, Jit et al. (2016) found that corporate and religious leaders demonstrate better conflict management and resilience traits by being humble. Church leaders who display their vulnerabilities through humility and modesty align with the actions of Jesus Christ (Kim, 2017). His sufferings and death allowed Jesus to initiate authentic relationships to his followers, guiding them toward their goals. Kim (2017) concluded that aligning their actions with this concept allows church leaders to provide better Christian soul care.

In addition to benefiting congregants as individuals, the behaviors of a servant leader contribute to the success of the church as a whole in its mission. Ferrari and Vaclavik (2016) noted that deacons practicing servant and transformational leadership styles influenced organizational achievement; these leadership styles led the church leaders to respect the congregation, listen attentively, acknowledge the contributions of others, admit mistakes, and engage with others. Suggestions from a qualitative study of clergy in the United States and China indicated servant leadership anchors an approach that allows church leaders to avoid worrying about negative perceptions from others and behave with dignity (Song, 2019). Consistent performance of these behaviors will inspire congregations and attendees to trust and respect a servant leader.

Driven by values, servant leaders seek to create an environment that inspires their followers to perform at their best. Accomplishing this objective requires the church leader to

empower the congregation. In a conceptual study, Fischer and Schultz (2017) identified empowerment as a best practice for unifying organizations in accomplishing their objectives. Empowering the congregation aligns with the leadership of Jesus, as when he equipped the disciples before deploying them for ministry (Creech, 2016). Through empowerment, church leaders demonstrate the discipline to avoid arrogance and superiority, thus promoting a culture of service.

### ***Performance as Stewards***

Church leaders manage the resources of the church (Mundey et al., 2019). In this leadership role, church leaders perform as stewards, carefully managing the resources entrusted to them by the religious institution. Proper stewardship of these resources requires various actions of leaders:

- *Responsibly oversee.* Performing as a steward of the organization, an activity requiring continuous performance is responsibly sustaining oversight of the church's resources (Pressgrove, 2017). Transparency with the congregation concerning the financial results of the organization is an action of this activity (Harrison et al., 2017). At designated times or closing of projects, church leaders should report the financial status and implications to the congregation.

Communicating accurately and timely of resource usage builds trust of the congregation. Another action of this activity is to sustain responsible oversight of resources to maximize the church's ability to perform its mission (Keay, 2017).

Religious organizations receive financial resources from donations and have volunteers for human resources (Brudney et al., 2019; Mundey et al., 2019).

Mismanagement of resources can influence negatively the congregation's behavior for donating monetary gifts and time.

- *Measure performance.* Another activity of a steward is measuring the performance of the organization in using resources (Pressgrove, 2017). One activity for a performance measure is establishing a budget, detailing the use of the resources. This practice builds trust and promotes giving from the congregation (Mundey et al., 2019). Another reason for measuring performance as a steward is identifying opportunities for improving management of resources. Tooley and Hooks (2020) implicates from a study the monitoring and improving resource management, human and financial, increases the viability and sustainability of an organization.

Acting as stewards is a mechanism for church leaders to build positive relationships with the congregation leading to accomplishment of organizational objectives.

### ***Performance as Business Managers***

The literature highlights the importance of church leaders' performance as business managers for guiding successful organizations (Masenya & Booyse, 2016; Thiessen et al., 2018; White & Acheampong, 2017). Bromley and Meyer (2017) proposed that nonprofit organizations practice business concepts similar to for-profit and government agencies, positing that this blurring of the lines is occurring because organizations in every industry are pursuing multiple objectives developing from cultural principles, endowing stakeholders to accomplish objectives and solve problems. In a mixed-method research project, Pedersen et al. (2018) found that church leaders, political leaders, and business managers performed similar job functions—and

indeed, ministers experienced substantially higher work pressure than leaders in the other categories because their work and private lives were highly integrated.

In a qualitative study by Masenya and Booyse (2016), two focus groups and seven individual interviews indicated that the curricula of higher education institutions for clergy had deficiencies in developing the management and leadership skills of potential ministers. The authors concluded that improving these training programs would influence the performance of the churches where those ministers would eventually serve. As business managers of their organizations, church leaders are responsible for the resources of the organization. In 2017, religious organizations across the globe had charitable contributions of \$127.37 billion (Munday et al., 2019). Church leaders performing as business managers align with the management theory of Henri Fayol. Voksted (2017) identifies six categories of activity under Fayol's management theory: technical, commercial, financial, security, accounting, and managerial. Each category is significant; however, the managerial category identifies the functions guiding the decisions, behaviors, and actions of church leaders. These functions lead to the development of a business strategy to accomplish the vision and obtain the objectives of the organization (White & Acheampong, 2017). In performing these managerial activities, church leaders are planning and coordinating church operations; organizing and commanding human resources; and controlling every activity and effort to accomplish the vision and mission of the church (Voksted, 2017). In a case study, Yip and Ainsworth (2015) detailed the integration of church activities and business practices in two megachurches in Singapore, concluding that church leaders demonstrate the recursive relationship between religion and business, providing opportunities for worship and service for their congregants.

**Planning.** This management function requires the church leader to assess future opportunities and threats influencing the organization (Voxted, 2017). By performing this function, the business manager will forecast events, establish objectives, and determine actions to take advantage of the opportunities and mitigate the threats (Parker, 2016). White and Acheampong (2017) concluded that planning helps managers perform other managerial functions more effectively, and that church leaders should consult the Holy Spirit during the planning process to align their business functions with the mission of the church.

Other studies highlight negative results when church leaders neglect planning activities. In a case study involving a large, suburban, evangelical church, Hartwig (2016) recounted that the senior leadership team had a facilitator to guide them through the strategic planning process for a project; the lack of engagement and ownership in the planning process from senior church leaders led to the project stalling. In a study of nine clergy responsible for parishes in rural England, Lawson (2018) identified the lack of strategic planning as an emerging stressor; the participants stated that the lack of strategic planning by the diocese led not having the right people, lay and ordained, in the locations where they were needed. In a case study evaluating the ethnic identities emerging from the budgetary processes of the Anglican Church of Melanesia, Hauriasi et al. (2016) indicted that the lack of planning negatively influenced the budgetary process, causing dissension. Proper execution of the management function of planning leads to mission accomplishment for organizations.

**Coordinating.** The coordinating management function consists of determining the schedule and sequence of activities (Voxted, 2017). By coordinating activities, church leaders can allocate appropriate resources, prioritize business operations, and synchronize the actions of the congregation to accomplish the organization's mission (Hatchuel & Segrestin, 2019).



Coordination also allows leadership to establish a contingency action plan to adapt priorities for delays or incomplete operations.

A case study of two congregations demonstrated the influence of the management function of coordinating (Wollschleger, 2019); one church had a church staff for executing church activities, while the other relied on committees made up of volunteers. The professional staff efficiently coordinated the activities of the church, leading to mission accomplishment, while the committees suffered from coordinating issues that lessened the performance of the organization. In another study, Jennings (2018) explored how the management of Better World, the NGO run by the Seoul-based Onnuri Church, coordinated operations in eight regions across 34 countries. Improving Better World's management functions has allowed the organization to continue its mission more efficiently.

**Organizing.** Aligning with the coordinating function, the organizing management function requires the manager to establish resource use (Voxted, 2017). In performing this function, church leaders establish responsibility for business activities and communication plans (Hatchuel & Segrestin, 2019). Organizing allows stakeholders to view the operational plan and the proposed method for accomplishing the organization's goals. In the case study of two Singapore-based megachurches (Yip & Ainsworth, 2015), the leaders of New Creation Church modeled the management function of organizing by reconciling their religious and business activities to accomplish the mission of the organization

In an ethnographic methods study of the management of diversity in urban churches, Barron (2016) emphasized the importance of organizing church activities to produce outcomes and experiences relating to the racial experiences of the congregation. Seeking to reorganize their religious institution, the leaders at City Harvest Church made business investments in Suntec

International Convention Centre, which led to the church owning 39.2% of the organization. These investments led to opportunities for City Harvest Church to provide an appealing and fulfilling facility for worship.

**Commanding.** This function allows for effective human resource management. In commanding, the church leader will have a thorough knowledge of the staff and congregation's skills and abilities (Voxted, 2017). This information supports the manager in planning and organizing activities to further the church's mission. The objective of a church leader in commanding is to establish a work environment promoting initiative, loyalty, and unity (Hatchuel & Segrestin, 2019). This management function is a sound measure for church leaders responsible for managing volunteers. An exploratory study by Kang (2016) examined a faith-based charity organization and suggested that leaders that are more engaging directly influence the participation of volunteers.

**Controlling.** Controlling is defined as monitoring the outcome of business operations and functions to evaluate their contribution to mission accomplishment (Voxted, 2017). By controlling, church leaders will assess the organization's operations for weaknesses, errors, and deviations that undermine achievement of organizational goals (Parker, 2016). Results of the assessment can lead the manager to modify the plan or take corrective actions to realign processes.

A grounded theory study by Wong et al. (2019) examined Canadian church leaders of flourishing congregations to identify the importance of the controlling management function; one theme from the data was that church leaders need training in recognizing opportunities to improve the performance of their organizations. Evidence has indicated that church leaders understand the importance of developing the management function of controlling (Tkaczynski et

al., 2016); in an exploratory study of church leaders who attended leadership forums, 76% of respondents over a two-year span indicated that they did so in hopes of improving in their performance in their leadership roles.

### ***Summary of Church Leader***

This section of the literature review identifies the dynamics of church leaders examining the concepts of servant leadership and stewardship to reveal their contributions in establishing a foundation for effective leadership. Another element of the basis for leadership is the role of the church leader as a business manager, establishing the importance of the knowledge, skills and abilities of church leaders in managing faith-based organizations.

Church leaders both provide guidance to congregations and manage the business affairs of religious organizations. Religious organizations, as a sector of the nonprofit industry, offer unique leadership challenges (McAllum, 2018). Research exploring faith-based organization's leadership issues is diverse, and focuses on several areas. The current study will narrowly focus on the implications of business managerial practices of church leaders.

### ***Nonprofit Industry***

Religious and faith-based entities make up a segment of the nonprofit sector. An organization receives recognition as a nonprofit by receiving exemption from federal income tax under section 501(a) of the Internal Revenue Code (Lampkin & Boris, 2002). The National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities (NTEE) system, implemented by the IRS in the 1990s, is the method of classifying nonprofits. Developers of the system identify positive implications for using NTEE for classifying nonprofits. The system facilitates the gathering, analyzing, organization, and presentation of data from nonprofit organizations categorized by their purpose and activities (Lampkin & Boris, 2002). This process promotes uniformity and comparability for

statistical analysis and interpretation of information from the nonprofit sector. The NTEE codes for classifying nonprofits are found in section 501 of federal regulations.

Congress identifies organizations that may qualify as nonprofits as those operating exclusively or organized for certain purposes (Internal Revenue Service, 2020). These purposes can include religion, charitable, scientific, testing for public safety, literary, educational, fostering national or international sports competition, prevention of cruelty to children or animals, social welfare organizations, homeowners associations, volunteer fire companies, chambers of commerce and child care companies. Other sections of the code define other entities with the potential to qualify as not-for-profit: (a) social welfare organizations, (b) homeowners' associations, (c) volunteer fire companies, (d) Chambers of Commerce, and (e) childcare businesses. Organizations seeking designation as nonprofits must meet certain conditions within each IRS code (IRS, 2020). With the implementation of the NTEE system, internal and external stakeholders for the nonprofit sector receive more reliable and relevant information for public policy and decision-making purposes (Plummer et al., 2019).

Literature indicates the development of the NTEE codes of nonprofit organizations creates both value and issues within the industry. Prior to the implementation of the NTEE codes Lampkin and Boris (2002) concluded from a qualitative study that current processes for classifying nonprofit organizations were limiting collection of data that could be useful for improvement activities. The implementation of the NTEE codes standardized data in the nonprofit sector, improving data quality and access. Another qualitative study (Barman, 2013) indicated that the NTEE system generates valid data that demonstrates the nonprofit sector's multiple contributions to society's wellbeing. Plummer et al. (2019) contended that with the expansion of the nonprofit sector, classification systems would become ever more important;

with the classification system yielding consistent and valid data, researchers can better understand how organizations are adapting to changes in society and addressing human needs.

Negative implications of the NTEE classification system have been identified in literature. In a mixed-methods inquiry of the NTEE codes, Fyall et al. (2018) concluded the NTEE classification system was viable overall; however, missing data, discrepancies in mission statements, and organizational mismatches between mission statements and service areas limited the reliability and relevancy of data. Julia et al. (2020) identified two issues leading to misclassification of nonprofits under the NTEE codes. The first issue is the naming of the institution not aligning with its activities or mission, which causes confusion for stakeholders. The other issues is the use of unconventional language (e.g., wordplay, neologisms, regional dialects, or foreign languages) in the naming process, which can mislead classifiers as to the mission and purpose of the organization. Because churches are an element of the nonprofit industry, church leaders need to understand the importance of the NTEE classification system and its effect on their organizations.

### ***Common Characteristics of Nonprofits***

Federal regulations identify common conditions among the IRS codes for each nonprofit category. One condition is organizing as a corporation or remaining unincorporated (Harris et al., 2015). These organizational structures establish accountability and governance for a nonprofit organization. Epstein (2018) noted that, like any nonprofit organization, religious institutions must be structured in ways that allow them to flourish, and determining the appropriate structure is a function of church leadership for organizations to flourish. Various methods of structuring, including incorporation, have positive and negative implications for nonprofit organizations.

**Structuring.** Incorporation is a structuring method for an organization, which provides protection to shareholders (Maier et al., 2016). Filing for incorporation requires management to list the purpose of the entity, define the capital stock of the corporation for authorized issue, and detail the rights and privileges of the stockholders, and list name and addresses of the incorporators (Pollman, 2016). In a comparative history approach in reviewing literature, Cordery et al. (2016) identified the benefits of incorporation for nonprofits.

After incorporating, the organization forms a legal entity protecting internal stakeholders' personal assets (Cordery et al., 2016). This limited liability protection allows only the organization's assets to be legally pursuable. Another reason for incorporating is that it allows the organization to create an operating structure that does not rely on a single person (Epstein, 2016). This status allows operations to continue accomplishing the mission and obtaining organizational goals even during circumstances wherein a key person becomes unavailable. Corporations can transfer shares, creating opportunities to create capital through investment from external stakeholders and entities (Cordery et al., 2016). As stewards and business managers, church leaders may elect to incorporate their organizations as a way to both manage the business operations and further the mission of the organization.

Another method to structure a nonprofit organization is as an unincorporated association. This occurs when a group of people performs tasks together to accomplish a common business objective or fulfill a common mission (April, 2017). An unincorporated association can either seek expressly to earn profits or perform a task to accomplish a purpose; in the latter case, it qualifies as a Section 501(c)(3) organization. If seeking to obtain recognition as a public charity, the association's stakeholders must adopt a constitution or publish bylaws and apply to the IRS

(April, 2017). One reason a nonprofit might organize as an unincorporated entity is to hide its mission and organizational goals (Ferrell, 2014).

An unincorporated structure produces some unfavorable conditions for internal stakeholders. Because the organization is not a separate legal entity, internal stakeholders are personally liable for its debts and liabilities (Cordery et al., 2016); similarly, the association cannot hold or receive and enter legal contracts as an organization (Cordery et al., 2016). The lack of limited liability protection and legal status discourage nonprofit leaders for establishing organizations as unincorporated associations. In an ethnographic study, Jensen and Meisenbach (2015) concluded that unincorporated status was not favorable for nonprofits because it creates tension among stakeholders and discourages financial support. The advantages and disadvantages of an unincorporated structure do not align with the mission and objectives of religious organizations.

**Profitability.** Another provision of a nonprofit is the business or organization may not pay out profits to an individual or set of shareholders (April, 2017). Leaders of the nonprofit apply net earnings and surplus of donations toward creating value for the organization. The creation of value can be from the generation of interest or dividends (Williamson, 2017). The increase in revenue from these sources allows the organization to accomplish its mission. Another option is reinvesting the capital to fund future operational costs and acquisition of resources (Williamson, 2017). These financial management practices demonstrate sound fiduciary responsibility by leaders of the organization. Managing the financial worth of the organization leads to accomplishment of its mission and achievement of its organizational objectives. Church leaders performing as stewards and business managers will integrate these management principles, guiding their organization in the accomplishment of their objectives.

**Public Support Test.** Among the provisions in the IRS code for denoting an organization as nonprofit, Horne (2017) noted one identified as the “public support test.” This requisite is fulfilled only if the entity receives at least one-third of its revenue from the public broadly, from government sources, or from nonprofit funding intermediaries. This requirement influences management practices with regard to acquiring and selling assets (Thomas et al., 2017). If an organization raises capital in financial ventures, lessening its public support revenue percentage below one-third, the organization may lose its tax-exempt status. Nonprofit organizations should thus align investment opportunities with their mission and purpose.

### ***Religious Organizations***

The NTEE codes includes the category “religious” among the tax-exempt nonprofit organizations recognizable by section 501(c)(3) of IRS regulations (2015). To qualify for recognition in this category, an organization needs to meet requirements laid down by the IRS. One general requirement is establishing a distinct form of worship (Scheitle et al., 2016). Institutions, including churches, synagogues, mosques, and temples, are recognizable as places of worship, regardless of the religious faith, beliefs, or practices of the congregants or attendees (Elson & Tarpley, 2015).

A number of other characteristics constitute grounds for recognition as a religious institution, driven by court decisions and governing policies. The IRS uses a combination of these traits to determine an organization’s status as a place of worship for tax purposes (IRS, 2015). Examples of these traits are distinct legal existence, recognized creed and form of worship, definite and distinct ecclesiastical government, distinct legal existence, recognized creed and form of worship, formal code of doctrine and discipline, and distinct religious history. Other prerequisites for religious organizations (not listed above) include a requirement not to take part



in political campaigns or attempt to influence legislation (Elson & Tarpley, 2015). For this case study, the researcher will narrow the scope to focus on churches with congregations and attendees of the Christian faith, beliefs, and practices.

### ***Church***

An element of religious organizations, the church, represent the largest entity. In 2010, the United States Religious Census listed approximately 350,000 religious organizations, of which 314,000 identified as Christian denominations (Grammich et al., 2012). As members of a religious organization, Christians gather for religious services, with worship services led by ordained ministers. The leaders of the church apply biblical principles to develop doctrines to guide the congregation in serving and worshipping Jesus Christ (Regev, 2016). Performing as servant leaders, stewards, and business managers, church leaders guide their congregations toward a relationship with God through Jesus and the community.

Church leaders establish the doctrine and practices of the church, which align with the teachings and life of Jesus. In this regard, the church is identified as the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22–23). In keeping with this concept, other biblical concepts denotes the church as kingdom and as Bride of Christ (Arbuckle, 2013). These beliefs represent Jesus as the head or leader of the church, with every person who believes in him constituting his body. Another biblical principle establishes the church as the household or temple of God. In the New Testament, Paul writes letters to several congregations in various geographical areas, each worshipping and working as a local entity (Regev, 2016). These contrasting views represent two models for Christians: universal church and local church (Abspoel, 2018). The Bible and elated academic literature distinguish between the two churches, while interconnecting the importance of each for church leaders and congregations.

**Universal Church.** Aligning with biblical scriptures and concepts, the universal church encompasses every person with a personal relationship with Jesus. Christians hold the day of Pentecost as the founding of the universal church (Abspoel, 2018; Nel, 2018). On this day, the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples (Acts 2:1–47; Acts 11:15). In 1 Corinthians 12:13, Paul writes, “For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.” Doctrine establishes only one universal church, a representation of the body of Christ. Entrance into the universal church requires a person to establish a personal relationship with God through Jesus (Nel, 2018; van Aarde, 2017).

After establishing the relationship and gaining entrance, Christians sustain membership through their behaviors and actions driven by the Holy Spirit (Nel, 2018; van Aarde, 2017). The Bible establishes that even in death, a person will remain a member of the universal church. Because of this promise, the universal church will always exist without division or separation (Eph. 4:4). Another indication that the universal church will always exist is its lack of a physical location (van Aarde, 2017). With Jesus as the foundation, the universal church is a spiritual organization encompassing all Christians.

**Local Church.** At the same time, scriptures establish the local church as the Christians in a given geographical area. Several books of the New Testaments are letters written by Paul referencing churches he encountered on his journeys (Gal. 1:2; Rom. 16:16). The founding of the various local churches found Christians establishing doctrine and practices in their communities (van Aarde, 2017). Membership of the local church contrasts with that of the universal church. Any person, Christian or nonbeliever, can gain entrance to the local church (Latinovic, 2016; Perez, 2019). The requirements for membership differ; the local church has man-made

conditions, while the universal church requires only that a person to be saved and a follower of Jesus.

Another major difference is the leadership of the organizations. Jesus is the understood leader of the universal church (Arbuckle, 2013; Nel, 2018), while local churches select their own leadership (Latinovic, 2016; van Aarde, 2017). The duties and responsibilities of church leaders differ. Representing the spiritual being of Jesus, the universal church has no physical location and possesses no resources (Arbuckle, 2013; Nel, 2018), while the local church comprises financial resources, physical assets, and human resources, with the congregation performing business operations (Yip & Ainsworth, 2015; Hauriasi et al., 2016; Kang, 2016). Because of the difference, local church leaders provide spiritual guidance to their congregants and manage the organization's business activities. Further review of the literature demonstrates the management requirements of the local church leader.

**Business Management of the Local Church.** Church leaders of local institutions integrate the theological, social, and business aspects of the church in order to accomplish their organizational goals. Business management of the local church requires planning, administration, and governance of human resources, finance and accounting, and operations (Kessler & Kretzschmar, 2015). Performing as servant leaders and stewards will positively influence the management knowledge, skills, and abilities of church leaders.

**Human Resource Management.** This management responsibility involves the recruitment, training, and retention of a high-performing workforce who create value for the organization (Arias et al., 2018). Jobs and positions in the church are diverse, requiring various types and degrees of knowledge, skill, and ability (Sainsbury, 2015). In the church, the congregation, attendees, and staff are the primary sources of the workforce (Wollschleger, 2019).

The religious organization may elect to compensate workers for job performance, although many congregants will volunteer as service to Jesus (Kang, 2017).

Those positions that receive compensation from the church make up the staff of the organization (Reimer & Hiemstra, 2015; Wollschleger, 2019). These positions fall into two primary classifications: ministerial personnel and support staff (Tkaczynski et al., 2017). The ministerial personnel are pastors and other church members who provide leadership and manage the ministries of the church (Neil, 2015). Administrative assistants, custodians, finance and accounting personnel are examples of support staff (Reimer & Hiemstra, 2015). The church's human resource manager will establish standards and requirements for each position in alignment with the mission and values of the organization.

As human resource managers, church leaders need to identify and employ volunteer talent to help the church execute its mission (Sainsbury, 2015). Local churches require the talents of musicians, singers, public speakers, teachers, and facilitators, among others (Reimer & Hiemstra, 2015; Baker, 2019). With limited finances, the church relies on volunteers to execute operations to accomplish its mission (Kang, 2017). Volunteers must not only possess the knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform the job function but also align with the vision and values of the church (Cnaan et al., 2017). This reliance on a volunteer workforce can create issues for church leaders who lack knowledge, skill, and ability in human resource management.

***Challenges of Human Resource Management.*** A major challenge facing church leaders is the decline in attendance of religious services. This decline is influenced by society-wide changes with regard to religious belief (Cafferata, 2017; Frank & Iannaccone, 2014; Haskell, Flatt, & Burgoyne, 2015; Tkaczynski et al., 2017). Fewer people are identifying as religious, leading to smaller congregations. Another factor contributing to the decline in attendance is

negative behaviors and practices by some congregations (Barron, 2016), which lead attendees to develop negative attitudes toward religious organizations and opt not to attend services. Religious organizations must make changes and improvements if they are to sustain and grow membership and attendance (Burge & Djupe, 2015).

Another challenge for church leaders is the increasing diversity of their organizations. As congregations become more diverse, churches must implement practices to leverage the knowledge, skills, and abilities of individuals. Dougherty et al. (2015) analyzed the results of a quantitative inquiry in the Evangelical Lutheran Church regarding congregational diversity and attendance, and found an increase of diversity from 6.4% in 1993 to 12.3% in 2012. The share of attendees are increasing who self-identified as other than non-Hispanic white. Another suggestion is proper management of resources by church leaders increases opportunities for the church to accomplish its mission. Church leaders who act as human resource managers need to manage the increasing diversity of their religious organizations to accomplish the church's mission and objectives.

Leveraging the diversity of the organization, however, can actually help churches conduct operations. A quantitative study of 720 congregations showed that more-diverse congregations carried out more service programs in their local areas (Polson & Gillespie, 2019). In a qualitative study, Wong et al. (2019) found that nearly 400 church leaders agreed that seminaries and training institutions should integrate diversity training into their curricula.

Another problem with a volunteer workforce in church leadership is the lack of training and education concerning human capital management (Krishnakumar et al., 2015). Allen et al. (2018) identified five emergent themes in the religious environment: new and unfamiliar groups and situations; messy, complex, and evolving problems; differences in needs between groups and

individuals; the need to create attractive and inclusive organizational cultures; and the need to create sustainable dialogue. These concepts are all related to human capital management; failure to address them could create issues in the work environment with negative implications toward the church's operations.

Another problem with a volunteer workforce is the professionalism of the workers. One element of this problem is absenteeism—that is, a person opting not to report as promised for a project or assignment (Word & Park, 2015). Excessive absences can have negative implications for the service and congregation. One factor that contributes to absenteeism is fatigue (Word & Park, 2015). Leaders must monitor volunteers—some of whom will overextend themselves in an initial burst of enthusiasm—to prevent burnout. Leaders must also keep in mind that volunteers might lack the skills and abilities necessary for performing the task for which they have offered their services (McAllum, 2018).

***Accounting and Financial Management.*** Another requirement of church leaders who act as business managers is managing the financial and physical resources of the organization. These management functions require knowledge, skills, and abilities in accounting and financing. Accounting practices are designed to monitor the intake and output of financial transactions of the church, and report those transactions to internal and external stakeholders (Heier, 2016). Financial management consists of planning, directing, monitoring, organizing, and controlling the physical and monetary resources of an organization (Prentice, 2016; Strang, 2018). The combination of these management functions creates value in an organization (Korzh et al., 2017; Maritan & Lee, 2017).

Church leaders who perform accounting and financial duties have several objectives. Their primary aim is to practice stewardship of the resources, allowing the organization to

accomplish its mission and achieve its objectives (Heier, 2016). Areas of responsibility include sustaining control of resources, establishing and monitoring budgets, soliciting and processing monetary donations, and monitoring and validating expenditures (Mundey et al., 2019). A second important responsibility is reporting accurately any information concerning the organization's resources, assets, and liabilities to internal and external stakeholders (White & Acheampong, 2017). Another goal is to ensure that the church complies with federal regulations and local laws regarding accounting standards (Heier, 2016).

***Implications of Accounting and Financial Management.*** Having church leaders who perform in this managerial capacity while lacking the requisite knowledge, skills, and abilities can lead to negative implications for the organization. In the United States, religious organizations benefit from the most philanthropic giving of any category in the nonprofit sector (Mundey et al., 2019; Zurlo et al, 2020); given the large sums of money in play, a lack of internal controls lead to fraud and waste within the church. Johnson et al. (2015), in an analysis of Association of Certified Fraud Examiners, estimated \$46 billion were unaccounted for among the global Christian church in 2014.

Accounting issues and financial mismanagement are also driving a decrease in attendance. A mixed-methods study (Haskell, Flatt, & Burgoyne, 2016) of 2,255 Protestant church attendees in Canada found that financial mismanagement is one characteristic of a declining congregation. Bernstein et al. (2015) concurred, concluding that substandard accounting and financial management practices in religious organizations create legal and ethical issues that can negatively impact future donations to the organization.

Just as in secular organizations, accounting and financial management issues can cause a church to file for bankruptcy (Foohey, 2015). A qualitative study by Cafferata (2017) suggested

that declining attendance and financial issues were dominant factors in pastors' decision to close churches. A mixed-methods research project (Foohey, 2015) made several discoveries related to accounting and financial management issues leading to bankruptcy in churches; the results confirmed that pastors with less business savvy were more likely to contribute to financial problems resulting in bankruptcy. Foohey also found that pastors were hesitant to seek help and advice, for fear that doing so would cause the congregation to question their leadership knowledge, skills, and abilities.

**Operations.** A third business management function relates to managing the operations of the organization. The primary operation of a Christian church is to connect people with Jesus Christ (Matt. 22:37–38; Nel, 2018; van Aarde, 2017). Led by church leaders, members of the local church have the operational objective of leading congregants, attendees, and visitors not connected to Jesus to become members of the Universal Church (Matt. 22:39–40; Wong et al., 2019). An ancillary mission in this operation is for people to connect with each other. This church operation follows the guidance given by Jesus for Christians to love one another as they love him (Matt. 35:10; Dunlow, 2017). Other business functions allow the church to perform these operations.

A church, in short, serves diverse functions in its community, and must execute several operations to accomplish its objectives. Its weekly services, for instance, performs multiple operations in furtherance of its primary operation (Bredenkamp & Schoeman, 2016; Thiessen et al., 2018): praise and worship, preaching and teaching, prayer, and solicitation of monetary donations. Church leaders establish a schedule of the operation, align resources, and control the environment to best accomplish of the objectives of their religious institution.



***Implications of Operations.*** The ministries of the church represent primary operations that influence both church leaders and congregations. Tkaczynski et al. (2017) concluded from a qualitative inquiry with 8,000 respondents—church leaders and congregants alike—that sermons and communion create value for the organization. Dantis (2015) concludes the vitality of parishes in Australia is higher when they practice communion and baptism operations regularly.

Findings suggest that flourishing congregations are more likely to have clarity of mission and purpose that aligns with their services (Haskell, Flatt, & Burgoyne, 2016). These conclusions emphasize the importance of management activities among church leaders. Another study indicates that conflict among staff and volunteers can negatively affect the operations of a church (Dunaetz, 2019). Constructive management of conflict by church leaders can lead to more effective programs and strengthen relationships with the congregation.

**Summary of Church.** This section of the literature review establishes the importance of church leaders in providing spiritual guidance and managing organizations. Church leaders provide spiritual guidance to congregations, helping them enter the universal church. As business managers, church leaders integrate the management competencies of human resources, accounting, and financial management and operations to accomplish their organizations' missions. In the next section, a more focused review will demonstrate how project management integrates the functions of human resource management, accounting and financial management, and operations for the successful execution of unique events.

### *Projects*

The literature defines a project as a temporary and unique activity or operation executed by an organization that brings about change or creates value (Gray & Larson, 2018; PMI, 2017). Within defined start and end dates, the project team will perform tasks to accomplish specific goals and objectives. The uniqueness of the activities and operations encompasses unknown elements, creating a risk for the organization. Organizations will commonly execute a project to address a known issue or to realize a business opportunity.

The defining elements of a project are:

- *Scope*: The activities or tasks the project team performs, along with the identification of resources to deliver a product, service, or result with the specified attributes and functions (Bingham & Gibson, 2017; Hussan et al., 2018).
- *Goals/Objectives*: The outcomes, outputs, and benefits to the organization directing the efforts of the project team (Robbins, 2019).
- *Deliverables/Milestones*: The inputs and outputs of tasks and activities executed by the project team within a specific timeframe (Aldosari, 2017).
- *Tasks/Activities*: Measures of work performed by the project team in the course of the project to accomplish its objectives (Hoda & Murugesan, 2016).
- *Team*: Members of the organization, normally from different departments or areas, working together to complete the tasks and activities specific to the project (Standing et al., 2016).
- *Stakeholders*: Organizational personnel and people external to the organization, all of whom have an interest or stake in the project's outcome (Chen et al., 2019).

- *Risk*: The chance that uncertain events or conditions might affect the project's scope or tasks, or the team's performance in accomplishing the project objectives (Lin & Parinyavuttichai, 2015; Taherdoost & Keshavarzsaleh, 2016).

Each of these elements can influence the success or failure of the endeavor.

### ***Project Failure***

Organizations commit resources (human, financial, and physical) for the execution of projects; therefore, project failure causes a loss of value to the organization. Failure occurs when the goals and deliverables of the project are not within the constraints of the timeline and budget (Gray & Larson, 2018). Factors leading to failure are collective, usually consisting of issues with the common elements of a project listed above.

**Scope.** The scope drives the success or failure of a project. An empirical research study by Collins et al. (2017) concluded that project teams with better scope definition execute projects measurably better than those lesser project scope definition. In a case study of 10 projects from seven mining companies, Kagogo (2019) suggested that a well-defined project scope improves scheduling performance; however, the results do not support the influence of scope on cost performance.

In a literature review of scope influence in software projects, Hussan et al. (2018) noted that an understanding of the scope provides project managers with methods to evaluate and control the schedule and costs of their projects. In a qualitative case study of 1,142 information systems (Sanchez et al., 2017), findings indicated that the management of scope directly influences the failure or success of projects. The study further suggested that scope helps control the other elements of the project, contributing to a successful execution.

**Goals/Objectives.** The identification and achievement of a project's goals drives the execution of tasks that determine failure or success. In a qualitative inquiry, Rostami and Oduoza (2017) suggested that leading contributors to project failure included inconsistent goals and misunderstanding of objectives. In the study, three construction project managers complained that clients often changed their minds with regard to the goals of the project, or the team misinterpreted the original design.

In a qualitative study of 86 project professionals, Assaf et al. (2019) indicated the modification of goals and objectives by internal and external stakeholders—for reasons including are new requirements from the client, delay by contractors, and inconsistencies with specifications—tends to lead to project failure. A study by Amoatey and Ankrah (2017) identified changes to the scope of road projects in Ghana during construction as a contributing factor in delays and other issues. If the team fails to accomplish the project's goal or objective, the organization may consider the project a failure.

**Deliverables.** Accurately defining, tracking, and managing a project's deliverables contributes to the success of the event or operation and decreases chances of failure. In a study of a multinational corporation's project execution, Chanda and Ray (2016) concluded that corporate headquarters and local contractors had different expectations of deliverables for the project team. The difference in the deliverables had a large impact on the project's failure.

In a qualitative study, Alenezi et al. (2015) suggested that an alignment between the deliverables and objectives must occur to ensure project success. Misalignment between these project elements leads to poor performance of tasks and activities by the project team. Romero et al. (2018) presented results from four case studies indicating that project planning, tools, and

methodology influence the project team's success in making good on the project deliverables. This lack of execution by the team leads to project failure.

**Task/Activities.** The completion of project-related tasks and activities within the allotted timeframe and with effective, efficient use of resources helps organizations successfully execute the full project. Lack of planning or an increase in the number of tasks, which may occur because of changes in project complexity, are major factors in project failure (Chanda & Ray, 2016). In another qualitative study, Alenezi et al. (2015) indicated that a solid understanding by project managers and teams of how tasks and decisions interconnect leads to successful projects.

In a grounded theory research design, Hoda and Murugesan (2016) explored the issues relating to the activities of self-organizing teams during a project's lifespan. They defined the levels of activity for any given project as project, team, individual, and task, and found that effective planning, knowledge sharing, harnessing technology, communication, and role understanding help the project team execute the activities of the project successfully. Another study (Bond-Barnard et al., 2018) indicated that the level of trust and knowledge sharing significantly influences the successful performance of tasks among project teams.

**Project Team.** An unproductive and unmotivated team can cause project failure. In a case study of 30 participants, Standing et al. (2016) drew several conclusions concerning how project teams influence the outcome of projects. Foremost is that the management of the organization needs fully to engage in the process of communication with team members and stakeholders; a lack of engagement by management contributes to project failure. Another implication is that the organization has a responsibility to assemble a team with the necessary experience and knowledge to complete its tasks (Standing et al., 2016). Team selection contributes to productivity and execution of projects.

In an empirical study, Taherdoost and Keshavarzsaleh (2016) found that team members' level of commitment and technical background contributed to project success or failure in the global market; thus management of organizations should consider these factors during the risk assessment phase to improve team performance. A mixed-method study with 146 participants indicated that teamwork influences success more strongly on projects related innovative products and services than for other types of projects (Wu et al., 2019); this further emphasizes the importance of team selection for executing projects.

**Stakeholders.** During project execution, internal and external stakeholders can influence the outcome. A study of the execution of collaborative construction projects (Chen et al., 2019) identified several stakeholder-related factors that contributed to failure: unresolved disagreements, absence of genuine and open communication, professional knowledge limitations, partnership and commitment issues, and negative attitude among the stakeholders.

In a qualitative study, Aldosari (2017) emphasized that the participants should identify the importance of internal and external stakeholders to project success, and define the responsibilities of each accordingly. Internal stakeholders should help develop the tasks and activities of the project because they possess the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform them. External stakeholders should drive the objectives and deliverables because they will be the ones using the product or service upon the project's completion. Conflict among stakeholders contributes to the failure of projects.

**Risk.** This element of projects needs to be identified and mitigated so as to reduce project failure. Gachie (2017), working from a descriptive and analytical research project, concluded that management's failure to proactively manage risk increases opportunities for project failure. Additionally, engaging stakeholders during the project contributes to its success. Lin and

Parinyavuttichai (2015), drawing on a case study, proposed that risk identification and management occur not only before the project but throughout the project life cycle; managing these escalating risk factors is crucial to completing the project successfully.

Another area of risk for projects is executing tasks at multiple sites. In an empirical study, Arashpour et al. (2016) showed that the risk of failure in a construction project increases when management activities occur at a different location from the work site. Sanchez et al. (2017) concluded that risk management must take place at every phase of a project.

### ***Project Manager***

The final common element influencing the performance of the temporary operation or event is the project manager. As a discipline of business management, project management is the formal practice and theory of executing projects by organizations (Baker, 2018). The project manager leads the project team in executing a successful temporary event or assignment. In managing the team, the project manager will apply the general business skills of planning, scheduling, budgeting, organizing and controlling (PMI, 2017). Henkel et al. (2019) identified a number of additional roles that project managers will assume at various times in the project life cycle, all of them contributing to their effectiveness in shepherding successful projects.

**Interpersonal.** This project management role requires the manager to establish norms and foster harmony with the team. To accomplish the responsibilities of the interpersonal role, the manager will perform as a leader and liaison. Skills in this competency include establishing teams, perseverance, and flexibility (Jeferson et al., 2019). In a qualitative study, Ke et al. (2015) suggested that positive interpersonal relationships in construction projects improve cost performance, client satisfaction, and relationship quality among stakeholders.

Ramazani and Jergeas (2015) conducted a qualitative study of 30 participants seeking to improve education and training programs for project managers; developing interpersonal skills was rated as a high priority. Interpersonal skills prepare project managers for real-life projects. In a review of literature on implementing project management principles in geoscience, Cristini and Walter (2019) concluded that the interpersonal role of project management is an important competency; the related communication and teamwork skills created a more efficient work environment and fostered integration among the stakeholders of the project.

**Informational.** This role enables the project manager to collect and share information to the project team and stakeholders. The project manager is also responsible for helping team members communicate effectively with others in the organization on matters related to the project (Henkel et al., 2019). To perform this role, the project manager needs written and verbal communication skills and competency in technology (Ramazani & Jergeas, 2015; Martínez-Rojas et al., 2016). In a grounded theory project, Ziek and Anderson (2015) concluded that communication could determine project success by influencing resource allocation and direction for the project. Smit et al. (2017) also suggested participants' verbal and technological communication methods contribute to the success of projects.

Another skill in improving the performance in this role is active listening, allowing the project manager to gather information from internal and external stakeholders (Henkel et al., 2019). A quantitative design study by Pryke et al. (2015) found that active listening contributes significantly to the formation of emotional relationships among project stakeholders. This positive openness in the relationships leads to project success. Using qualitative research methods, Berg and Karlsen (2016) concluded that project managers who act as coaches should



practice communications skills including active listening during projects. Disseminating information for project success is an essential ability for church leaders.

**Decisional.** For project managers, this role involves initiating project activities and taking corrective actions for project success (Henkel et al., 2019). The project manager will also negotiate with stakeholders to acquire and allocate resources, and to establish the project scope. A case study exploring project management philosophies (Novac & Ciochina, 2018) indicated that the lack of a decisional role in a team management concept contributes to project failure. The lack of decision-making among the team leads to underperformance in activities and mismanagement of resource allocation. This has important implications for church leaders acting as project managers.

**Risk Management.** During the project, managers are responsible for identifying, analyzing, and minimizing issues that might negatively affect the progress of a project (Cagliano et al., 2015). This crucial skill allows the project manager to monitor for risks and implement mitigation strategies. Developing a risk management plan can prepare the project team to address uncertainties in the project execution and maximize value to the organization (Haq et al., 2018). In a review of literature, Cagliano et al. (2015) identified the phases of the risk management process.

Project managers use different risk management processes, each with different tools and techniques, to analyze data with an eye to mitigating risk. Each method has common phases: identifying and understanding risk, assessing the probability of occurrence and effect, prioritizing risk factors, and developing response strategies and contingency plans (Cagliano et al., 2015). One schema for categorizing risk management strategies is as qualitative or quantitative (Barghi & Shadrokh-Sikari, 2020). A project manager using a *qualitative risk*

*analysis* process prioritizes risk factors by assessing and connecting their probability of occurrence and effect (Burkov et al., 2018; Perrenoud et al., 2017). *Quantitative risk analysis*, by contrast, involves numerically analyzing the influence of risk factors on overall project goals and deliverables (Gupta & Thakkar, 2018; Hugo et al., 2018). Church leaders can use either method to manage risk for projects.

During the project life cycle, anything that might affect the schedule, performance, or budget is considered a risk (Sharon & Dori, 2017). The project manager will, with extensive planning, develop mitigating strategies for each risk, ensuring that a potential risk does not become an active problem. In a qualitative case study, Vuorinen and Marinuso (2019) suggested that risks are interconnected during each phase of a project, and that successfully identifying and planning for changes will create opportunities for successful completion. A case study of LNG using flexibility analysis of mitigation strategies (Cardin et al., 2015) suggested that planning activities in the project phase led to value creation in projects. Risk management during the project life cycle is a vital skill for church leaders guiding projects for religious organizations.

**Integration Management.** This project management competency entails keeping the complete interconnected project as a set of unified activities and tasks (PMI, 2017). Integration management occurs during each phase of the project life cycle. Accomplishing this task requires the project manager to maintain equilibrium among the common elements of the project (Demirkesen & Ozorhon, 2017b). Through integration, the project manager can help the organization execute successful projects. In a qualitative study involving 16 interviews with project managers, Banihashemi et al. (2017) identified several critical success factors for implementation management: the role of clients, knowledge management, high-quality workmanship, strategic direction, and health and safety protocols. In larger organizations, the

project management office will integrate individual projects to accomplish the overall goals of the business (Tsaturyan & Müller, 2015).

The knowledge and ability needed for integration management lead to successful project execution for project managers. In a mixed-methods research project, Demirkesen and Ozorhon (2017a) noted that integration management is particularly significant in the performance of construction projects. In an analysis of 121 projects using structural equation modeling, they found a strong correlation between performance in integration management and in overall project management. In a case study involving project execution at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant, Gorod et al. (2018) suggested that integrative management improves project execution and governance for organizations. Integrating activities and processes helps project managers execute successful projects.

**Resource Management.** This management competency involves training and developing human resources; estimating and acquiring financial resources; and controlling physical resources during project execution (Demirkesen & Ozorhon, 2017b). Intersecting with other management competencies, resource management occurs during the planning phase of the project life cycle. (Phases of the project life cycle are explained in further detail in an upcoming section.) During the controlling and executing phases, the project manager monitors resource allocation and use, ensuring the project stays within its scope, budget, and schedule. Ineffective resource management is a major contributor to project failure (Burkova et al., 2019).

Executing projects requires the consumption of resources; effective and efficient management is thus vital to project success. A qualitative case study by Kusimo et al. (2019) compiled opinions from 14 experts, who identified seven key factors affecting project resource management: project complexity during planning, inadequate data on the project site,

inadequate knowledge of resource profile, changes to project schedule, parallel multiple projects, shortages of specialized resources, and poor management of client-specific authorizations and certifications. A descriptive correlation study with 400 participants (Mahjoub et al., 2018) showed a strong direct correlation between human resource allocation and organizational project performance. In a case study, Pinha and Ahluwalia (2019) concluded that flexible resource management improves a project's value to an organization; optimal resource management leads to project success for organizations.

### ***Project Governance***

An element of the conceptual framework, project governance integrates the competencies of servant leadership and stewardship to establish a framework for managers to guide successful projects. An organization establishes project governance with policies, regulations, functions, processes, and procedures for project execution (Bekker, 2015; Müller, Zhai et al., 2016). Defining the establishment, management, and control of projects in an organization is another element of project governance (Musawir et al., 2017). Governance defines a clear hierarchy of authority and decision making, including the planning, influencing, and conducting of the policy and affairs of the project. Internal stakeholders provide direction guiding the achievement of needed projects to align with the overall organizational strategy (Bekker, 2015).

The main aim of project governance is to align unique events and special operations with organizational objectives (Musawir et al., 2020). By defining a structure within the organization to administer projects, governance provides active direction, linking the value of project execution to the organization (Brunet & Aubry, 2016). Reviewing the processes, results, and identifying factors influencing the success and failure of previous projects is another goal of

project governance; this information can help the organization establish best practices for project selection and execution.

Several principles establish project governance within an organization. The first principle is the concept of a single point of accountability (Zwikaël & Smyrk, 2015). This principle argues that the project owner needs to be independent of the asset owner, the service owner, or other stakeholder groups (Amadi et al., 2018). Single-point accountability helps the project team meet the needs of internal and external stakeholders while optimizing the value of resources for project completion. Another principle of project governance is separating stakeholder management from project decision-making activities (Musawir et al., 2020). This practice discourages personal interest from influencing the selection and execution of projects by individuals.

A third principle is ensuring separation between project governance and organizational governance structures (Musawir et al., 2020). Organizational governance structures may not focus management decisions toward project management. Establishing a project governance structure flattens multilayered decision-making, reducing time delays and inefficiencies in project execution. The complementary structure provides an important element of the project management hierarchy within the organization (Bekker, 2015). Establishing the project governance structure entails defining the roles, responsibilities, and performance indicators for project managers, team members, and other internal stakeholders (Müller et al., 2016). Establishing a project governance structure supports project control throughout the project life cycle.

***Project Governance Relationship with Servant Leadership Theory***

Servant leadership theory helps establish project governance by building trust and collaboration among project managers, team members, and stakeholders (McAuley, 2019). As a servant leader, the project manager displays behaviors of empathy and caring for positive team building. He or she will listen intently to members of the project team, valuing each individual's knowledge, skills, and abilities. In a qualitative study of 48 project teams, Krog and Govender (2015) used structural equation modelling and path analysis to conclude that these behaviors by project managers lead to employee commitment and trust. Results of an empirical study (Zwikael & Smyrk, 2015) indicated project governance helps the project manager establish support from the project team and internal stakeholders. These traits lead to a successful project execution.

Servant leaders are aware of any needs and issues among the project team members that might affect their successful performance of duties. With forward thinking, the servant leader will address issues and intrateam conflicts as they develop. The project manager, performing as a servant leader, will have a strong commitment to the project team. He or she will help the project team members grow and develop their knowledge, skills, and abilities for professional and personal opportunities. Sergeeva (2019) conducted 25 narrative interviews with project managers and concluded that aligning governance with trust leads to better team performance. A qualitative case study (Le Roy & Fernandez, 2015) suggests that project governance provides support for conflict-mitigation strategies instituted by project managers. The shared contributions of performing servant leadership and project governance helps project managers execute successful unique operations and events.

***Project Governance's Relationship with Stewardship Theory***

Project governance provides structure to managers responsible for executing unique operations and events, creating value for the organization. In a mixed-method empirical study, Joslin and Muller (2016) proposed that stewardship theory contributes to establishing the structure for project governance in an organization. In part, this is because stewardship and project governance both require oversight of the organization's resources (Pressgrove, 2017). Stewardship is predicated on responsible management of resources by organizational leaders, while project governance establishes the framework for monitoring and control of project resources (Bekker, 2015; Keay, 2017). These aligned concepts allow for the identification, selection, and execution of projects that directly support the organization's mission.

Another leadership activity of stewards is measuring the organization's performance as regards the use of resources; this management function is critical to optimizing resources to create value for the organization (Tooley & Hooks, 2020). Governance provides a structure for establishing best practices for identifying and selecting projects (Brunet & Aubry, 2016). Integrating these activities allows for maximization of resources in business activities and projects for optimal value to the organization (Hjelmbrekke et al., 2017). Integrating the knowledge, skills, and abilities of a servant leader while practicing stewardship and project governance will enable church leaders to successfully execute projects.

***Project Life Cycle***

Project managers will lead project teams through the sequential phases of the project life cycle: initiating, planning, executing, controlling and monitoring, and closing (PMI, 2017). Completion of each phase comprises different activities requiring various skills and the performance of varied roles (Su & Ping-Kuo, 2016). In a qualitative case study of 109 project

managers, Golini et al. (2017) concluded that using a project cycle and logical framework for guidance improves the likelihood of project success.

**Initiating.** The initiation of the project starts with the establishment of a business case. A stakeholder in the organization will identify a specific problem or opportunity requiring action to solve or realize its potential for the creation of value (Zwikael & Meredith, 2018). The stakeholder will become the project sponsor, or champion, responsible for supporting the project to success. Business cases consist of the following elements: problem statement, objectives, and potential solutions (Ssegawa & Muzinda, 2018). The business case is the project sponsor's request for managerial support for the project.

After gaining management support, the next step in the initiation phase is selecting a project manager (Kloppenborg & Tesch, 2015). The first tasks of the project manager are developing a charter, aligning the project with the organization's strategy, defining the goals and deliverables, and assigning the roles of the project team members (Chun-Hsien & Ping-Kuo, 2016). Another activity during this phase is conducting a needs assessment, further refining the project's objectives to align with the organization's strategic plan (Williams et al., 2018). In a literature review, Williams et al. (2018) linked these initiating activities to the alignment of projects with the organization's strategic goals.

**Planning.** The next phase of the project life cycle is planning. The project manager defines the special knowledge and skills required of the team members for successful project execution (Walker & Lloyd-Walker, 2019). These data help with the identification and selection of employees to take part in the project. The project team is a temporary structure; the members will complete project tasks while performing their normal duties and responsibilities within the organization. Using the interpersonal and informational managerial skills, the project manager



will communicate the strategic significance to the organization of executing the project and obtaining its goals (Walker & Lloyd-Walker, 2019). Establishing trust and collaboration is important when establishing the team. Bond-Barnard et al. (2018), using structural equation modelling of 151 project practitioners, found that the likelihood of project success increased with higher levels of collaboration and trust among team members.

Other activities in the planning phase include creating a schedule, establishing a budget, and identifying communication processes (Williams et al., 2018). Project planning tools and techniques can assist the project manager and team with these tasks (Pellerin & Perrier, 2019). The creation of the schedule will identify specific deliverables and tasks for accomplishment (Pinha & Ahluwalia, 2019). With this timeline, the development of a resource allocation plan for accomplishing the tasks occurs. The final activity during this planning phase is developing project metrics; these data points align the project with the organization's priorities, guiding the actions and behaviors of the project team. In a case study of 121 construction projects, Demirkesen and Ozorhon (2017a) concluded that activities during planning have a direct impact, positively or negatively, on the performance of the project.

**Executing.** The third phase of the project life cycle represents the highest proportion of tasks and activities (PMI, 2017). During the execution phase, the project team will deploy human, financial, and physical resources. Using interpersonal and informational managerial skills, the project manager will guide the team's performance (Ke et al., 2015). Effective communication with team members and stakeholders will help with project success. A case study of Engen Refinery (Mhlanga et al., 2016) indicated that poor communication is a major factor for delays and failures in projects. Issues of resource procurement and delivery also play a role in

causing projects to fail; with that in mind, the project manager is responsible for removing barriers hindering the team's progress (Novac & Ciochina, 2018).

One framework for executing projects is the critical path analysis and method (Takakura et al., 2019). This project management tool determines which activities are critical in total project time. With this information, the project manager can schedule and execute these activities for optimal completion of the project. In a case study of a firm conducting IT projects, Celkevicius and Russo (2018) found that identifying the critical path allows for directing adequate human resources for project execution. This process led to project execution and completion.

**Controlling and Monitoring.** In this phase, the project manager oversees the progress of the team. The quality control activities of this phase can also occur during and after the execution phase (Pellerin & Perrier, 2019). One important task in this stage is monitoring the project team's use of resources, thus ensuring the project remains within the budget (Chun-Hsien & Ping-Kuo, 2016). Another responsibility is directing the team to maintain the project schedule for completion. The project manager will also monitor for risks and obstacles; if these are detected, he or she will implement mitigating actions to help with the progress of the project (Blaskovics, 2016). In performing these activities, the project manager is guiding the team toward a successful project completion.

A management tool to help control and monitor a project is earned value analysis (PMI, 2017). This quantitative tool compares the project plan to the progress and actual resource costs of resources (Khesal et al., 2019). A quantitative study by Martens and Vanhoucke (2017) found that earned value analysis provides project control, improving the performance of the team. An analysis of three case studies (Khesal et al., 2019) showed that the use of control charts improved

earned value management, leading to more effective project management techniques. Ong et al. (2016) conducted a quantitative study integrating two planning and monitoring, the Gantt chart and earned value analysis, resulting in improvements in resource allocation, systematic reporting, and monitoring enhancement.

**Closing.** The final phase of the project cycle is closing. In this phase, the project manager will document the team's accomplishments, identify any gaps in achievement, and record observations for future endeavors (PMI, 2017). Another activity during this phase is evaluation of the actual project accomplishments against the metrics and objectives (Kloppenborg & Tesch, 2015). This evaluation can occur during the closing phase and periodically afterward. The final activity is a team meeting, where members receive accolades for their participation and feedback for improvement opportunities (Gomes et al., 2018). Closing phase activities can help the organization plan successful projects to realize opportunities to create value for the organization. In a qualitative study, Gomes et al. (2018) suggested that the closure processes improves organizational performance of projects by providing opportunities for knowledge sharing.

### ***Church Leaders and Church Project Management***

The application of project management by local church leaders creates value and provides potential important benefits for the organization. The local church executes common projects aligned with biblical guidance from the Old and New Testaments. The execution of unique operations and ministries undertaken by the congregation creates opportunities for mission accomplishment.

**Construction.** A major project a church can execute is new construction or remodeling of its current facilities (Yip & Ainsworth, 2017). The building in which the local church meets

for worship creates value for the organization. These temporary endeavors by the local church require the execution of the project life cycle by church leaders.

The local church embodies the values of its congregations and attendees (Burge & Djupe, 2015). For the community, the church provides support, refuge, and comfort within a building (Barlow, 2019). When deciding whether to undertake a construction project, the church's internal stakeholders must discern among the benefits and risks of new construction, remodeling, and maintenance of existing buildings.

During church construction, issues concerning the deliverables and expectations can influence the outcome. Brenneman and Miller (2016) noted that during building projects, internal stakeholders will often have conflict concerning the size and style of the building. In conducting two case studies, Son (2019) investigated how the competencies of project management can influence a church in executing its mission when constructing new facilities; in both cases, the lack of project management knowledge, skills and abilities among church leaders led to conflict among the congregants.

Management of resources during construction projects of churches is important for success. In a case study, Stackhouse (2018) showed how a church adjusted its project goals and expectations because of resource limitations; realigning the goals to the available resources led the church to a successful construction project. Valinte (2017) looked at the construction of new facilities for Franklin Avenue Baptist Church as an example of project resource management by church leaders. The church needed a new facility to accommodate its growing congregation, but held off on starting the project until the organization had the financial resources to execute without incurring debt. In this way, church leaders were practiced both project governance and stewardship.

Risk management comes into play for any local church construction project. In a qualitative study from South Africa, Mathebula and Smallwood (2017) interviewed 12 religious leaders about a remodeling project; during the execution, safety management was deemed a secondary concern, increasing risk at the location. A risk assessment of the building discovered health and safety issues that affected the congregation. Performance gaps from underqualified team members, lack of specification in the deliverables, and minimal project governance led to project failure.

**Mission.** Lotter and Aarde (2017) detailed the benefits of mission work as a project for religious organizations. First, it aligns the ministries with the goals and objectives of the church. Planning, organizing, and executing missions as projects also helps improve church leaders' performance as servant leaders and stewards (White & Niemandt, 2015). These management concepts are useful to the church leader in developing the congregation to undertake missions (Mathias et al., 2017; Thompson, 2015). The following list are several types of targeted mission work a church may perform that would require church leaders to act as project managers.

- *Financially disadvantaged.* One mission type that helps communities is generating and providing financial support for economically disadvantaged individuals or families (Tower, 2016). White (2019) concluded from a case study that economic support of individuals helps the church with its mission through branding efforts. Another implication of the case study is that project planning competencies contribute to brand creation for local churches, creating economic opportunities.
- *Children.* Mission projects should seek to meet the physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual needs of the youth (White, 2019). These projects align

with the biblical teachings of Jesus, who spoke of helping children obtain the Kingdom of Heaven (Matt. 19:14). Equipping children through missions requires interconnectedness among the congregations through engagement and empowerment (Shaw & Costantineanu, 2016). In another case study, Rooms (2015) linked the church's economic missions with relationship-building in the community. Project management competencies can help church leaders initiate projects to accomplish these objectives.

- *The Elderly*. Supporting and helping the elderly is a mission that aligns with biblical teachings (Tamas et al., 2015). Two case studies by Collins and Hawkins (2016) demonstrated the importance of projects helping elderly people and their caregivers by establishing projects to provide activities and resources to reduce caregivers' burdens.
- *The Community*. As an integral part of the community, the local church should conduct projects bringing the message of Jesus and blessings to the people (White, 2019). In a literature review, Manyaka-Boshielo (2018) concluded that local churches conducting community mission projects can contribute hope by providing support to their neighbors. In a case study based in Africa, Mutemwa et al. (2018) found that local churches conducting community projects can promote positive living and Christian views.

Accomplishing any of these mission goals requires effective project management. Undertaking a mission requires church leaders to identify a scope, develop a schedule, and allocate resources. Project management knowledge, skills, and abilities can lead to successful execution of these unique events and special operations for the church.

**Special Occasions.** Churches and religious organizations will host unique events commemorating special occasions and causes (Azzara, 2019; Cnaan et al., 2017). One special event for a church is its anniversary (Finley, 2019). Dowson (2017), in a thematic review of literature, identified event types as conferences, conventions, festivals, anniversaries, and touring. In a case study, Cnaan et al. (2017) suggested that management practices in unique events and special operations influence the satisfaction experienced by attendees and congregants. Learning and developing the competencies of project management can provide the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for church leaders to manage the unique events and operations.

### **Transition and Summary of Section 1**

The literature review suggests that there is a need for more research exploring the performance of church leaders as project managers; such research would present practical benefits for religious organizations. The issues facing faith-based organizations in project management affect the accomplishment of their mission objectives. Poor performance of church leaders in managing unique operations and events has negative implications for the congregation and attendees. Improving the knowledge, skills, and abilities of a church leader in managing projects benefits both the individual and the religious institution.

Studies focusing on church leaders as managers of business functions of religious institutions identify many shortcomings in their performance of these duties. Opportunities for improving the performance of church leaders as business leaders abound in the realms of human resource managers, resource management, and operations management. The body of knowledge in the project management field provides evidence of how the knowledge, skills, and abilities related to this management competency can address these leadership issues. As servant leaders

and stewards of their faith-based entities, church leaders are keen candidates for acquiring and applying project management knowledge, skills, and abilities to better direct their organizations in accomplishing mission objectives.

Church leaders have a responsibility to the congregations and attendees of their organizations to provide competent leadership, and thus to seek opportunities to improve as business managers. Performing as servant leaders and demonstrating good resource stewardship aligns with biblical teachings. Writing to the church at Corinth, Paul states:

For if I do this of my own will, I am still entrusted with a stewardship. What then is my reward? That in my preaching I may present the gospel free of charge, so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel. For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all that I might win more of them. (1 Cor. 9:17–19)

Paul also writes, “[W]hatsoever ye do, work heartily, as unto the Lord, and not unto men, knowing that from the Lord ye shall receive the recompense of the inheritance: ye serve the Lord Christ” (Col. 3:23). The knowledge, skills, and abilities of project management aid church leaders in guiding their organizations to advance the Kingdom of God and serve their congregations (Mihai, 2018; White & Acheampong, 2017).

Current research discusses the overall management function of church leaders as business leaders in a general way. This study will narrow the focus to the performance of church leaders as managers of unique operations and events. By exploring this theme, this research project presents an opportunity to expand the body of knowledge on improving the performance of church leaders as they guide their organizations to accomplish mission objectives. The goal of the study is to evaluate the current knowledge, skills, and abilities of church leaders in



southeastern Virginia, Mississippi, and Texas. The next section gives details of the qualitative approach and case study design used for this research project (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

## **Section 2: The Project**

The focus of this qualitative research study is exploring the degree to which church leaders in southeastern Virginia and surrounding areas understand how the knowledge, skills, and abilities of project management can help them manage unique events and special operations. As business managers of nonprofit organizations, church leaders are responsible for the management of the human, financial, and physical resources of the organization in furtherance of its mission. A thorough review of the literature on church leaders and project management has shown how this business competency can contribute to the successful execution of unique events and operations by churches. The aim of this multiple case study is to answer the following research questions.

- How do local church leaders use their knowledge, skills and abilities to define a unique event or special operation so as to align it with the organization's vision and mission and integrate it into the organization's normal business practices and processes?
- How do local church leaders in Virginia, Mississippi, and Texas manage unique events or special operations to accomplish their objectives?
- How do local church leaders in Virginia, Mississippi, and Texas allocate resources for unique events or special operations?
- How do local church leaders in Virginia, Mississippi, and Texas develop and lead project teams to accomplish unique events or special operations?

The multiple case study design provides the best option for gaining an understanding of the current knowledge, skills, and abilities of church leaders as regards project management.

The role of the researcher is to design an objective study, the results of which will contribute to the current body of knowledge relating to church leaders acting as project managers. The qualitative multiple case study method was selected as the preferred approach for providing answers to the research questions. The principal collection activities for the study are surveys and interviews; the participants are leaders of Baptist churches in southeastern Virginia. This section discusses the research method, research design, population, and sampling; an analysis of the data collection, data analysis, reliability, and validity follow.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study is to gain an understanding of the influence of project management knowledge, skills, and abilities of church leaders on their capacity to accomplish the specific objectives of unique events or special operations. This research explores the larger problem via an in-depth study of church leaders in Virginia, Mississippi, and Texas.

Multiple studies have drawn a conceptual connection between the disciplines of spiritual guidance and project management. Mihai (2018) applied the teachings and actions of Jesus Christ to the body of knowledge of the Project Management Institute (PMI), demonstrating a direct link between the two that improves the performance of church leaders. White and Acheampong (2017) detailed the importance of planning and management for church leaders as they guide organizations toward accomplishing the mission agenda; and Block (2013) noted that church leaders have the responsibility to seek opportunities to improve their performance as organizational managers.

Munday et al. (2019), reviewing the current research, concluded that monetary donations to religious institutions represent 31% of all charitable donations. With substantial financial

resources in play, church leaders who lack managerial knowledge, skills, and abilities are mismanaging the contributions (Johnson et al., 2015). One study indicated that the lack of managerial internal controls increases opportunities for fraudulent use of church resources (Thornhill et al., 2016). Foohey (2015) posited that church leaders often lack the knowledge to make sound financial decisions, but that concern for their image prevents them from seeking expert advice, leading to poor financial decisions for their organizations. Munday et al. (2019) offered some hope that more research into church leaders' resource management can improve the performance of religious organizations. The present study contributes to his effort, seeking strategies for improving resource management among church leaders.

This study explored the competencies of project management (as defined by PMI) that are necessary to improve the performance of church leaders in managing projects. This study collected data from leaders of small, medium, and large organizations to determine their understanding of the knowledge, skills, and abilities of project management, and their application to business operations. For this research project, the definition of "church leader" is a person appointed or responsible for presiding over the spiritual or business components of the organization.

For the research study, the definitions of knowledge, skills, and abilities are in accordance with federal regulations (Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures, 1978). For our purposes, *knowledge* refers to the body of information of a factual or procedural nature to perform adequately the duties of the job. *Skills* in the context of this study means proficiency in manually, verbally, or mentally manipulating data or things for job performance. *Ability* refers to the power to perform an observable activity needed for job performance at the appropriate time.

The research findings may allow more church leaders to explore opportunities to increase their understanding of project management, and thereby to improve the performance of their organizations and their own management of resources. The multiple case study furthers an understanding of how project management knowledge, skills, and abilities can influence the performance of church leaders in managing unique events or special operations to accomplish the objective of a religious organization in Virginia, Mississippi, and Texas.

### **Role of the Researcher**

As a human instrument, the researcher was a full participant in this study, providing an objective view of the respondents' experiences through narrative and interpretive bricoleurs. With the narrative bricoleur, the researcher constructed the experiences of the participants using an ethical approach, communicating and analyzing their accounts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). The researcher framed and narrated the participants' descriptions of the phenomenon through positivist, post positivist, and social constructivist paradigms (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Through the interpretive bricoleur, the researcher's interaction with the material was shaped by his personal history, biography, gender, social class, race, ethnicity, and persons in the setting (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). At the time of the study, the researcher held certifications in Lean Six Sigma and Human Resource Management. These certifications represent the elements of the researcher's education and experience that inform the interpretive bricoleur he formed of the participants' narratives. The data collection and analysis methods synthesized the products of the research into a whole, providing the results of the study. With the researcher taking both participatory and subjective roles, the researcher's narrative and interpretive bricoleurs contributed positively to the suggestions from the study.

A best research practice for accomplishing these objectives is for the researcher to form a positive, interactive relationship with the participants. An essential element of this relationship is for the researcher to initiate dialogue with the participants by encouraging and answering their questions. The researcher engaged the participants with actions reflecting humility and gratitude to them for sharing their experiences. This interconnection created an enabling environment, promoting enriching narratives from participants, which in turn generated themes and concepts.

The collection, analysis, and dissemination of the participants' narratives required the researcher to uphold ethical research practices, providing autonomy, respect, and justice for the participants. Important actions in this process included receiving approval from and following the guidelines of Liberty's Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher interacted directly with the participants in their natural environment (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018), which stimulated reflection and discussion between the researcher and participants. The researcher constructed an interview guide, with questions leading the participants to provide answers relevant to the case study. Quality questions generated in-depth answers for analysis, which determined the presence of themes or natural generalizations in the cases that people can learn from, apply to their lives, or transfer to similar contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Another role of the researcher was seeking representation of the population through a sampling strategy. Performing this role required the researcher to establish a two-step purposive sampling framework. Initially, the researcher sought participants solely from Christian churches in Virginia. Achieving this research objective led the researcher to the website Churchfinder.com, where it was possible to search, retrieve and compile a list of organizations identifying as Christian churches. Several hundred churches met the criteria; therefore, the

researcher had to generate additional criteria for sampling the population. By seeking only Christian churches with websites, the researcher narrowed further the potential candidates for the study. This criterion helps with the research project by providing contact information for pastors, staffs, and stakeholders who became potential participants for the study. This sampling process led to the identification of 115 potential candidates. The researcher sent invitation letters and a screening survey (using Liberty's IRB format) via email to church leaders, requesting their participation in the study.

For a qualitative case study, Yin (2016) proposes 40 cases or fewer as the ideal number for obtaining valid and reliable results. After having limited responses from church leaders in Virginia, the researcher expanded the population to Mississippi and Texas. These locations were selected because of the researcher's personal familiarity with these areas. The researcher directly contacted church leaders in these locations to determine interest in participation. This second step of the sampling strategy provided a representative sample of the population.

Interviews occurred in personal settings of the participants' selection, which provided security and safety. Because of the pandemic environment and distance, the researcher provided alternate methods for data collection. Interviews were conducted in person, by telephone, or in Zoom meetings. Using a recording device, the researcher captured the interview of each participant for documentation and analysis. The researcher also made notes of interactions and behaviors of the participants during the interview. After each interview, the researcher transcribed the dialogue and immediately compared the transcript with the observation notes for reliability. Within two days, the researcher scheduled a second interview with the participant to review and validate the transcript. These follow-up interviews were all conducted by telephone. The researcher executed the data analysis process upon approval of each transcript by the

participant. Using the NVivo software, coding of the data occurred, leading to emergent themes. Another purpose of the NVivo software is to establish an audit trail for reliability and validity strategies.

### **Participants**

According to Creswell and Poth (2018), the quality of participants increases the validity, reliability, and value of the research project. For this qualitative case study, participants are church leaders managing the business functions of a religious organization. Titles of church leaders can range from pastors, elders, deacons, and staff members. Identifying and gaining access to participants required the researcher to use a two-step purposive sampling framework to identify and select participants using the Churchfinder website (Ames et al., 2019). The researcher contacted potential participants via email and telephone, with an introductory letter and prescreening survey (sent by email) detailing the purpose of the study, their requirements for participation, and an informed consent form.

For adherence and compliance with Liberty's IRB, the researcher used templates from its website for the introductory letter and survey. The letter communicated the process for protecting the participant from harm and deception and safeguarding his or her privacy and identity (Yin, 2018). The letter also provided the participants with notice of their rights before, during, and after the study. It was made clear throughout that participation in the study was voluntary, and participants could end their participation during the study at any time without risk or harm with their relationship to the institution; any data or information collected from a participant who went on to terminate his or her participation in the study would be removed and destroyed. A second notice informed participants that they would receive no compensation for participation in the research project. These procedures fostered a positive working relationship with the participants.



Following the guidance of Liberty's IRB, the researcher took action to provide ethical protection of participants. The researcher created a list of church leaders responding to the introductory letter and screening survey in a password-protected Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. After failing to recruit enough participants in Virginia to obtain saturation, the researcher directly contacted church leaders in Mississippi and Texas. Church leaders willing to participate were added to the Excel spreadsheet; using the function RANDBETWEEN (), the researcher generated and assigned each participant a unique numerical value. Any communication, references, or documents used these values for the duration of the research project. The researcher placed this document on his personal laptop in a password-protected privacy folder. These practices and measures provided adequate ethical protection of participants, establishing a positive rapport with the researcher.

### **Research Method and Design**

The purpose of this study is to investigate the knowledge, skills, and abilities of church leaders in managing unique events and operations. Seeking to provide complex textual descriptions of how church leaders manage projects, the researcher chose the qualitative research approach. More appropriate than quantitative research, which relies on access to numerical measurements, the qualitative approach allows the researcher to capture the human essence of the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Identifying the qualitative approach as the most appropriate research method, the primary researcher will act as the primary instrument for collecting, reviewing, and analyzing the data. This research project will contribute to the literature on improving the performance of church leaders as business managers.

The design of the qualitative research method is a multiple case study. Because of the different opportunities for a church leader to manage a unique event or special operation, the

researcher considers each participant a separate case. The multiple case study design allows the research to collect the narratives each church leader for comparison and analysis (Haven & Van Grootel, 2019). To identify common themes, the principal investigator analyzed each case with NVivo software program (Di Mauro et al., 2018). With the software program, the researcher established an audit trail contributing to the reliability of the project.

### ***Discussion of Method***

The qualitative approach effectively obtains the perspectives of the population as regards a certain phenomenon, specifically their values, opinions, behaviors, and social contexts (Yin, 2018). Valuable in identifying social norms, socioeconomic status, gender roles, ethnicity, and religion, qualitative methods capture hidden themes and premises from participants (Robson & McCartan, 2016). Through interactions with participants, researchers using qualitative methods can employ their own subjectivity and interpersonal skills during the project. By building relationships with the participants, the researcher will capture the narratives and imagery relevant to the knowledge, skills, and abilities of church leaders in project management. With these data, the researcher can better interpret, understand, and communicate the complex reality of the phenomenon and its implications (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The current literature demonstrates how qualitative methods are conducive to gaining and analyzing the insights of participants using knowledge, skills, and abilities of project management. I-Chan (2018) used qualitative research to suggest nonprofit organizations can improve performance through better project management from leaders. In another study, Davies et al. (2017) examined the experiences of 170 participants and identified five common themes for managing large, complex projects. These five rules are assess what has worked before; organize for the unforeseen; rehearse first; calibrate and apportion risk; and harness innovation

from start to finish. Conclusions of the study are the performance of project managers can improve with the integration of these five common rules into their project management program. By conducting a qualitative inquiry, the primary researcher will explore the knowledge, skills, and abilities of church leaders in managing unique operations and events.

### ***Discussion of Design***

Exploring church leaders' knowledge, skills, and abilities in project management, the research design for this inquiry is a multiple case study. This qualitative method facilitates the exploration of participants' insights, beliefs, and actions about the challenges and opportunities related to the phenomenon in question (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A multiple case study design is the most appropriate for this research project because it allows the researcher to assess and understand the knowledge, skills, and abilities of each church leader managing a unique event or special operation. The diversity of projects will yield narratives with different themes and descriptions. The multiple case study design allows the researcher to analyze the stories of each participant to identify common themes. Through this analysis, the researcher will communicate how church leaders' knowledge, skills, and abilities in project management influence their performance at managing unique events or operations.

Current research suggests multiple case study as an effective design for topics related to project management. Using a multiple case study, King (2017) suggested professionals in nonprofit organizations are experiencing an increase in the knowledge, skills, and abilities to manage the unique events and operations; Yip and Ainsworth (2015) used a multiple case study to explore how church leaders integrated religion and business activities to develop megachurches in Singapore. These case studies led the primary researcher to conclude that the multiple case study is most appropriate design for the present study.

***Summary of Research Method and Design***

For this research project, the primary researcher will use a qualitative method multiple case study approach to collect and assess narratives regarding the knowledge, skills, and abilities of church leaders in managing unique events and special operations. With the multiple case study design, the researcher will explore each church leader's narrative as an individual case.

Qualitative methods allow the researcher to interact and establish trust with participants to investigate their experiences and perceptions of the phenomenon. Analysis of the data can lead to the identification of themes and best practices to improve the management of projects by church leaders.

**Population and Sampling**

The value of qualitative research's contribution to the literature starts with the identification of the population (Krause, 2019). A well-designed study can give a voice to previously unheard or underrepresented groups. The initial step in identifying the population is establishing the entire group of people, or target population, about whom the researcher hopes to generalize the results of the study (Asiamah et al., 2017). Further refinement of this target population comes as the researcher identifying the portion of which he or she has reasonable access (Krause, 2019). Factors for identifying the accessible population may include demographics, location, or institution. Accomplishing this aim requires the researcher to establish a sampling framework. Sampling is the process of selecting the participants for the study when it is not reasonable to research the entire population (Farrugia, 2019). The framework details the criteria necessary of the population for selection as participants in the project. An effective sampling framework contributes to the reliability and validity of the research.

### ***Discussion of Population***

The target population for this qualitative case study is church leaders in the United States. The United States Religion Census of 2010 listed 314,000 Christian churches in the United States (Grammich et al., 2012). To narrow this qualitative inquiry, the researcher identified the accessible population as leaders of Christian churches in Virginia. The website Churchfinder.com lists over 1,000 Christian churches in this geographical area. Using a two-step purposive sampling framework, the researcher selected participants responsible for managing the unique operations and events of Christian churches. Given the lack of responses from church leaders in Virginia, the researcher directly communicated with additional church leaders in the states of Mississippi and Texas.

### ***Discussion of Sampling***

For this qualitative case study, the researcher used a two-step purposive sampling framework for determining the target participants. Purposive sampling maintains variety and balance during selection of participants while also sustaining equitability (Yin, 2018). Ames et al. (2019) demonstrates how a multiple-stage sampling process contributes to the reliability and validity of a qualitative inquiry. Conducting a qualitative research project exploring the parents' and informal caregivers' views and experiences of communication concerning childhood vaccinations, the researchers applied a multiple-stage qualitative sampling strategy to reduce 79 eligible cases to 38 participants. The study demonstrated how multiple-stage purposive sampling strategy in qualitative research contributes to the reliability and trustworthiness of findings.

The first step of the framework is the homogeneous purposive sampling strategy. This sampling method entails selecting specific cases with the same or similar traits and

characteristics (Palinkas, 2015). Specifically, the homogeneous purposive sampling strategy involves selecting cases with experience of the phenomenon of interest who are available and willing to participate (Farrugia, 2019). The purpose of this study is to assess the perspective of church leaders on how the knowledge, skills, and abilities of project management influence the performance of their organizations in executing unique events and operations.

The requirements of the study make purposive homogeneous sampling the initial preferred method for selecting the participants. One requirement, at least initially, was for the participant to be a church leader in Virginia. The researcher established an account on the website Churchfinder.com and searched for Christian churches in Virginia. This initial step produced a large pool of potential participants, which the researcher narrowed by denomination (selecting only Baptist churches) and by geography (searching only in the Hampton Roads area). This generated a somewhat smaller but—at several hundred churches—still unmanageably large pool of potential candidates. To further focus the sample, the researcher made the stipulation that the church must have its own website that provides contact information for church leaders and stakeholders. This purposive homogeneous sampling requirement also served to provide the researcher with information necessary for sending the invitation letter and screening survey to potential participants.

The purposive homogeneous sampling strategy led to the identification of over 100 Baptist churches in Virginia. Yin (2016) proposed a number of 40 or fewer sources as optimal for single-case studies. This number of participants allows the researcher to build and sustain relationships with all participants, promoting an interactive exchange of information. Creswell and Poth (2018) recommend 20 participants to achieve saturation in a case study project. Saturation is the objective of a qualitative study whereby data collection from additional

participants would no longer generate novel concepts or themes (Yin, 2016). Gentles et al. (2015) suggested researchers should strive for saturation, and then continue researching several cases validating the themes.

Of the 125 invitation letters sent, response from church leaders were less than 20. The minimal response was insufficient to reach data saturation. The researcher contacted directly ten church leaders from Mississippi and five from Texas. Church leaders contacted had no prior relationship with the researcher. Solicitation to participate occurred because of the local church association among the church leaders with the participant's family. This entailed changing the second element of the purposive sampling framework to a heterogeneous or maximum variation sampling strategy. The resulting sample of population led the study to have participants from multiple states.

A heterogeneous sampling strategy is effective for qualitative studies. Van Hoeven et al. (2015) compared random sampling to purposive maximum variation and found the latter had a lower prediction error (15%, as compared to 19% for random sampling). In another study, van Rijnsoever (2017) suggested that purposive sampling strategies are significantly more efficient than random sampling while requiring less repetition per code for validation of findings. These results came from a simulation case study comparing sampling strategies in minimal and maximal information scenarios. The two-step purposive sampling framework identified participants contributing to the validity and reliability of the research project.

### ***Summary of Population and Sampling***

For this qualitative multiple case study, the target population is church leaders of Christian organizations in the United States. Using the website Churchfinder.com, the researcher identified the accessible population of church leaders in Virginia. The purposive homogeneous

sampling strategy led to the identification of over 100 Baptist churches within Virginia. When the purposive sampling strategy failed to yield a sufficient number of participants, the researcher conducted a heterogeneous sampling strategy in the states of Mississippi and Texas. Using a heterogeneous sampling strategy, the researcher identified 15 appropriate participants representing the accessible population. The two-step purposive sampling process led to reliable and valid data contributing to the quality and value of the study.

### **Data Collection**

In qualitative research, data collection operates within a cultural context, with the perceptions and beliefs of the researcher influencing the process. To mitigate his perceptions and beliefs, the researcher conducted bracketing measures. With permission from Liberty University's IRB for using human participants, the researcher performed as the primary instrument for this research project by conducting interviews. Using an integrative approach, the researcher (1) prepared an interview protocol, (2) conducted the interview, and (3) iterated each session (Arsel, 2017; Castillo-Montoya, 2016). Other instruments for data collection were the introductory email (Appendix A), screening survey (Appendix B), and interview guide (Appendix C). This subsection also includes an explanation of data organization tools and techniques, including methods of protecting the participants' confidentiality and privacy.

### ***Instruments***

Commonly used data collection instruments for qualitative studies are participant observation, face-to-face in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Functioning as an active participant in each of these methods, the researcher becomes the primary data instrument by collecting data with his or her observations, perceptions, interactions, questions, and answers through all other instruments. Another data collection instrument, the



screening survey, allows for collecting data from large groups in a standardized fashion. The third instrument, the interview guide, directs the interviewer toward the information needed to address the research questions (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). All of these instrument have elements that make them the preferred methods for data collection for this research project.

**Researcher.** Before beginning data collection, the researcher completed the bracketing process to mitigate his personal bias and perceptions from the process. As the primary instrument in data collection, the researcher conducted interviews to ascertain the participant's experiences and perspectives on the phenomenon. An assumption of the interviewer is each case was that each participant would have meaningful and explicit knowledge of the subject, providing value to the study. During the in-depth interview process, the researcher gained new insights and details. Interactions with the participants allowed for in-depth and concise exploration of the case. Clarity of questions and answers occurred during interviews for the researcher and participants increasing the reliability and validity of the data.

In capturing the narratives of participants, the interviewer followed a four-step approach. The first step of the approach is preparing an interview protocol to help with the data collection process. The protocol starts with a brief introduction of the interviewer, description of the study, explanation of the interview process, discussion of terms, and encouragement of participant's questions. The protocol also discusses how the researcher will protect the privacy and confidentiality of the participants, finally establishing informed consent from the participant. Using the template provided by Liberty University's IRB, the researcher developed a written document highlighting the procedure and expectations of participation, to avoid ambiguities.

The next component of the approach is establishing an interactive relationship with the participants. An important element of the relationship is the researcher gaining a context of the

participants' culture. With this understanding, the researcher can establish parameters for dress, tone, and vocabulary to use during the interview. An interactive relationship can also help determine the interview protocol for each participant. Although each case will be a church leader, their roles and responsibilities within the organization may differ, requiring different questions. This information can increase the value of the research.

The last component of the approach is implementing ethical practices to protect the participants. When conducting research, the primary investigator—by capturing and communicating the narratives of the participants—is in the position of power. Because of this status, the researcher (following the guidance of Liberty's IRB) implemented protocols to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the participants.

For reliability and validity of the data, the researcher used an audio recording device during the interviews. During the interview, the researcher also used a paper journal, noting reactions and behaviors of participants during the process. The researcher transcribed the interviews using Microsoft Word documents. While transcribing an interview, the researcher checked the transcript against the notes for more insight. The researcher provided each participant a preliminary copy of the relevant transcript for review and corrections. Once the participant validated the data, the researcher secured the information in a password-protected folder on his personal computer. Only the researcher will have access to the documents, and will maintain the records for three years. These ethical practices created an environment that promoted honest and active participation.

**Introductory Email and Survey.** Another data collection instrument was the introductory email and screening survey. The purpose of this instrument was collecting information from potential participants for the two-step purposive sampling framework. Using

Liberty University's IRB template, the researcher developed this data collection instrument. Church leaders volunteering to participate answered several "Yes" or "No" questions, allowing to researcher to verify their eligibility for inclusion in the study. Questions requiring answers for selection included (a) performance as a church leader, (b) approximate number of attendees, and (c) participant age, between 18 and 65. For the sampling process, participants were asked to provide average attendance figures for the church, including online attendees. Finally, the introductory email and survey informed the candidates of their inclusion in a volunteer interview pool.

**Interview Guide.** The third instrument for the study was an interview guide. Research indicates interview guides create value in qualitative studies (Goodell et al., 2016; Kallio et al., 2016; Pedersen et al., 2016). The purpose of the guide is to create consistency during an interview process involving multiple participants, linking the foundation of the study to the data collection process (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Standardizing the questions for each participant, the interview guide maintains focus on the main concepts of the study. In reviewing qualitative dissertation challenges, Rimando et al. (2015) suggested interview guides can improve the data collection process, contributing to the reliability of the study. Developing the research guide into sections focusing on the research questions provides opportunities for participants to provide quality, reliable, and valid information (Kallio et al., 2016).

The first section of the interview guide is the welcoming and opening process. Seeking to establish a rapport with the participant, the researcher initially asked introductory questions (Arsel, 2017; Castillo-Montoya, 2016). Rimando et al. (2015) suggested opening questions increase the comfort level of participants by helping them with the sharing of their narratives. After the initial questions, the interview guide listed descriptive questions concerning the role of

the participant within the church. The questions were divided into three sections addressing the research questions. Kallio et al. (2016) suggested using probing questions beginning with interrogative words such as *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, and *how*. The last section of the guide provides participants a chance to ask questions and make comments. Including this opportunity in the guide builds the relationship between the researcher and participants, promoting the exchange of information.

The main content of the interview guide are sections seeking to obtain information-rich responses addressing the research questions of this study. Research indicates that open-ended questions promote meaningful answers from participants in qualitative studies, yielding the themes and descriptions that answering the research questions (Cakir & Cengiz, 2016; Castillo-Montoya, 2016). Each research question comprises a section, with probing and prompting follow-up questions to refine further the participant's response. These questions elicit answers concerning the church leader's knowledge, skills, and abilities to plan, coordinate, organize, command, and control unique events or special operations. During the interview, the researcher asked each primary and secondary research question. Follow-up questions to refine further the participant's response were asked as necessary (determined by the researcher during the interview).

The researcher conducted a field test of the interview guide to increase its value to the project. Another reason for the field test was for the researcher to conduct the bracketing process and thus increase the validity of the study. Dikko (2016) suggests that preliminary testing helps construct the validity and reliability of an interview guide. The field test can serve the following functions:

- Help the researcher master the interview process, becoming more efficient and effective (Dikko, 2016).
- Ensure relevancy of questions (Kallio et al., 2016).
- Confirm questions elicit participant's responses regarding their perceptions and experiences relating to research questions (Pedersen et al, 2016).
- Identify ambiguities and unnecessary questions (Kallio et al., 2016).
- Establish the length for the interview (Dikko, 2016).
- Refine contributory inquiries to improve coverage of interview guide (Kallio et al., 2016).
- Detect potential flaws or limitations in research method and design (Dikko, 2016).
- Translate the relevant and dynamic dimensions of the questions into every relevant language (Pedersen et al, 2016).

For the field study, the researcher selected two church leaders not within the geographic location of the participants. By conducting the field test, the researcher contributed to the reliability and validity of the study.

### ***Data Collection Techniques***

For this multiple case study, the researcher used four methods of data collection. The first collection technique was web-based screening identifying the population of church leaders in southeastern Virginia. The Churchfinder.com website identified a large population of church leaders in the geographic location requiring a sampling process. To narrow further the pool, the researcher added the criteria if Baptist churches with their own dedicated websites—a data collection technique, incidentally, that provided contact information for emailing the invitation letter and screening survey.

The screening survey is another method for collecting data. Respondents to the introductory letter were added to the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. Because of limited responses, the researcher expanded the geographic area to include church leaders in Mississippi, and Texas. The researcher contacted these church leaders directly via emails and phone calls, followed with the introductory letter and discussion. This heterogeneous sampling process led to data saturation for the research project.

Interviews were the primary data collection for this multiple case study project. Research identifies three types of interviews for qualitative methods: structured, unstructured, and semi-structured (Barrett & Twycross, 2018; Hawkins, 2018). Structured interviews adhere to the guidelines of an interview protocol. An advantage of this format is that researchers can target specific objectives with a comprehensive list of questions (Moser & Korstjens, 2018); but the rigidity of structured interviews limits opportunities for probing and exploring further themes from participants. Following the pattern of normal conversations, unstructured interviews are relatively formless, creating opportunities for the researcher to explore topics at will (Barrett & Twycross, 2018); a drawback to this style is that the researcher may need to conduct multiple interviews with participants to capture the necessary data.

A combination of structured and unstructured, the semi-structured interview format was the preferred method for this research project. This flexible method helped the researcher both to capture the necessary data and establish an interactive relationship with participants (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). The semi-structured style requires the researcher to follow the framework of an interview guide while allowing opportunities for probing and exploring themes. These in-depth interviews occurred face-to-face at locations of the participants' choice, over the telephone, or

via Zoom. The researcher used an interview guide during each interview to provide structure and consistency to the questions.

The researcher limited the time of the semi-structured interviews to 45–60 minutes, conducting no more than two interviews per day. Rimando et al. (2015) suggested researchers conducting multiple long interviews in a day can lead to fatigue. They further suggested recording the interviews to ensure the reliability and validity of the data. During the interview, the researcher asked each primary and secondary research questions in the interview guide. The researcher used an audio recording device to capture the interview for transcription. During the interview, the researcher used a field journal, making notes of the participants' actions, reactions and behaviors during the interview. The researcher used the field notes during the transcribing process to triangulate the data, contributing to the validity and reliability of the project.

### ***Data Organization Techniques***

Data organization and security are essential elements of any research project, with the primary researcher fully responsible for the development and implementation of the system. For this study, the researcher established a comprehensive cataloging and storage system for tracking and securing the data and emerging themes. Adhering to the policies of Liberty's IRB, the objective of the system is to develop and enact measures providing strict confidentiality of human subjects' names, characteristics, and incidental comments. Finally, the researcher retained the organization system and all correspondence from the study for the mandatory three years, after which he will destroy all items.

**Database.** The main component of the data organization system is a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. This spreadsheet will be password-protected or stored in password-protected folder on the researcher's personal computer. After completing the two-step purposive sampling

framework, the researcher created a worksheet listing Baptist churches in southeastern Virginia with websites. Information within this worksheet included public contact information of church leaders. After sending out of introductory surveys, the researcher created a second worksheet listing the respondents. Using the Microsoft Excel function `RANDBETWEEN()`, the researcher assigned a unique, random code to each respondent. Given the lack of potential respondents, the researcher directly contacted church leaders in Mississippi and Texas. Church leaders willing to participate were added to the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and assigned a unique, random code.

The researcher created a Microsoft Word document cross-referencing the participants with the code. This document will also have a unique password for access and be stored in a separate password-protected folder. During the interview process and data analysis, the interview referenced these codes only in the field notes and interview transcriptions.

**Field Notes.** During the interviews, the researcher took notes about the participant's actions, responses, and expressions to questions. The purpose of the notes is to supplement the audio recordings for triangulation during the data analysis process (Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018). Nonverbal behaviors communicate feelings and thoughts of participants. The researcher combined this information with the interview notes to develop fully the narrative of the participants. These documents were scanned as PDF files and stored on the researcher's computer in a password-protected folder. The researcher shredded the original documents.

**Interview Transcripts.** The primary researcher transcribed the interviews for each participant from the audio recordings and field notes, using Microsoft Word. An email with the transcription of his or her interview was sent to each participant for accuracy. Once the transcript was approved, the researcher saved the documents as PDF files and stored them in a password-protected folder.



**Confidentiality and Privacy.** The data organization system consisted of common precautionary practices to assure the confidentiality and privacy of participants, in accordance with Liberty's IRB policies. Establishing codes for participants, limiting access to information, and separating storage of research documents and data files in locked locations are security measures within the organization system. Any person accessing the data files on the researcher's computer will need to execute a three-step verification process requiring passwords for the computer, folders, and files.

The researcher implemented measures to protect the privacy and security of the participants during the interview process. Each interviewee selected and communicated his or her chosen location of the interview to the researcher. The researcher communicated to the participant that the location must be a private room with controllable access. For in-person interviews, when arriving at the location, the researcher verified the security measures of the location. During interviews over the phone or via videoconferencing, the researcher assumed the participant was in a private, secure location. Before data collection started, the researcher explained to the participant his or her rights, provided details of the security measures, and had the participant sign a consent form. By signing the consent the form, the participant acknowledged he or she participated voluntarily in the study, without force or compensation from the researcher. Furthermore, the participant acknowledged an understanding that he or she may was free to terminate the interview without causing harm to his or her relationship with the university, and that his or her information would consequently be removed and destroyed. The audio recordings will be kept as files on the computer of the researcher in a password-protected folder.

### ***Summary of Data Collection***

For this multiple case study, the primary data collection instruments are the researcher, prescreening survey, and interview guide. Using the sampling process, the researcher selected participants, then conducted interviews using the guide. An element of the introductory letter, the prescreening survey aligned with the templates of the Institutional Review Board. Field tests were held to improve the reliability and validity of questions in the interview guide. The researcher adhered to policies of Liberty's IRB to develop a data organization system with privacy and security measures protecting the rights of the participants.

### **Data Analysis**

The objective of qualitative research is to explore the values, meanings, beliefs, thoughts, experiences, and feelings of the participants toward a phenomenon. Encompassing organizing and coding words, observations, and images, qualitative data analysis provides subjective and in-depth explanations, understandings, and interpretation of the participants' narratives (Creswell & Poth, 2018, Yin, 2018). The literature establishes a five-step framework for categorizing, coding, and analyzing qualitative data (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Cruzes et al., 2015; Vaismoradi & Snelgrove, 2019). Using the five-step data analysis process, the researcher will gain an understanding of how project management knowledge, skills, and abilities influence church leaders' management of unique events or special operations in southeastern Virginia. Suggestions from the data analysis will be insightful and actionable, contributing to the performance of church leaders as business managers.

### ***Organize and Prepare***

The first step of framework analysis was transcribing interviews and field notes (Cruzes et al., 2015; Vaismoradi & Snelgrove, 2019). This step occurred within 48 hours after

completion of the interview. The initial process for transcribing involved assigning unique identifiers for each question, allowing for auto-coding of the broad themes. Using Microsoft Word, the researcher transcribed answers to the questions and field notes to a document using the assigned, unique codes. Organizing and preparation are important for establishing the trustworthiness and credibility of a study (Houghton et al., 2017). The organization and preparation of the raw data prepares the information for importing into NVivo software program for coding and analysis.

### ***Reading through the Data***

A multiple case study generates a vast amount of information that the researcher must read thoroughly several times (Nowell et al., 2017). The immersion process into the data started when the researcher transcribed the interviews. While transcribing the interviews into Word documents, the researcher reviewed his field notes in light of the transcript. For validity and reliability, the researcher conducted second interviews with all participants to review and validate the transcriptions (Nowell et al., 2017). Participants alerted the researcher to any discrepancies or misinterpretations, which were immediately corrected; the researcher amended the transcripts aligning with the participant's views and interpretations. After the validation process, the researcher continued thoroughly reading the narratives of each participant to gain an overall understanding of their meanings (Vaismoradi & Snelgrove, 2019). This second step of the data analysis framework contributed to the coding process.

### ***Coding the Data***

In qualitative research, unique sources generate data requiring the researcher to catalogue it for analysis. The purpose of coding is to reduce the data by identifying relevant information from the collection process, thus developing interrelating themes and descriptions (Belotto,

2018). Creswell and Poth (2018) defined coding as fragmenting and classifying text to form explanations and comprehensive themes in the data. Corbin and Strauss (2015) described coding as an examination of the discrete parts of data for differences and similarities through either open or axial coding methods. *Open coding* aims to identify the discrete concepts, while *axial coding* primarily seeks to designate the method of establishing links in novel ways between the groups and subgroups. For this project, the researcher conducted a two-step coding process identifying emerging themes and relationships.

The first coding process for this study was open coding. Importing the transcriptions into the NVivo software program was the initial step in the open coding process. Maher et al. (2018) indicated that data analysis with computer programs can positively influence the coding process for qualitative researchers; using the program, the researcher will conduct an inductive approach for coding data (Nowell et al, 2017). An inductive approach requires the researcher to review and scrutinize each document, line-by-line, identifying themes and descriptions (Bostrom, 2019). This process is more efficient with the NVivo software program, which allows the researcher to annotate and organize the nodes or themes in the transcripts with notes (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). The initial open coding process categorized churches by their attending congregation size as small, medium, or large. Creswell and Poth (2018) established codes across three categories:

- topics readers expect to find, based on past literature and common sense,
- surprising and not anticipated at the beginning of the study,
- unusual and of conceptual interest to readers.

This fragmentation of the data will produce a quantity of open themes and descriptions requiring further focus.

Continuing the inductive approach to focus the coding, the researcher reviewed the nodes, identifying similar themes. The researcher then developed higher-level themes for each church category, creating a hierarchy of nodes. Each church category partook of the higher-level themes. Performing these operations in NVivo required the researcher to create the parent nodes as the higher-level themes; he then categorized each other node as child nodes and assign to a corresponding Parent node. The open coding process continued until 5 to 10 common themes were identified in each church category.

### ***Interrelating Themes/Descriptions***

The fourth step of the framework was identifying interrelating themes or descriptions among the cases. For this project, the researcher identified interconnections among data in the categories of small, medium, and large churches (based on weekly attendance). Through continuous comparisons, case to case, a theoretical framework developed (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). The coding process for identifying the interrelating connections among themes and descriptions was axial. With axial coding, the researcher determines which themes or descriptions are dominant among the church categories, thematically constructing a model for interpreting the meaning of the themes and descriptions (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

Functions of the NVivo software program allow for an efficient axial coding process (Maher et al., 2018). The primary method within the NVivo program for conducting the axial coding process is the framework matrix query. With the matrix query, the researcher can capture and visually display themes from multiple cases; the product of the query is a table, allowing the researcher to explore and compare the themes among the cases. Another function of NVivo software program is Analyze, which auto-summarized the data for analysis, detailing the interrelationships among the nodes of the matrix query. The results were easy to file and transfer

for further analysis and organization. By conducting an axial coding process with the NVivo software program, the researcher established reliable records and enhanced the trustworthiness and creditability of the study.

### ***Interpreting the Meaning of Themes/Descriptions***

The last step of the framework was interpreting of the data for suggestions. Influential factors of the interpretations were the researcher's personal culture, history, and experiences. Corbin and Strauss (2015) stated qualitative research can confirm past information, deviate from it, or lead to further inquiries. The researcher developed a thematic map of how the knowledge, skills, and abilities of church leaders in managing unique events and special operations is occurring. The researcher identified opportunities for improving the performance of church leaders as business managers.

### ***Summary of Data Analysis***

For qualitative case studies, the researcher will develop insightful suggestions from the data through an analytical interpretation process. The five-step process led to the development of themes and descriptions by open coding the data. Axial coding identified the interrelationships and interconnections of the themes. The researcher again used the NVivo software program, improving the efficiency of the coding process. Results of the data analysis produced a thematic map providing a visual description of interconnections among the themes and descriptions. Finally, the researcher communicated insightful conclusions by comparing the knowledge, skills, and abilities of various church leaders in managing unique events and special operations.

### ***Reliability and Validity***

Important elements that contribute to the value and quality of a qualitative multiple case study are reliability and validity (Yin, 2018). The literature suggests achieving reliability and

validity in qualitative studies requires strategies for obtaining credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018, Yin, 2018). *Reliability* is designing a study that yields similar results if other researchers replicate or repeat the process (Yin, 2018). *Internal validity* of study promotes credibility by defining how well the study characterizes the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Yin (2018) suggested that external validity, or transferability, exists when results and conclusions from participants apply to other units of the population. Integrating reliability and validity strategies into the research design and methods improves the value and quality of the project.

### ***Reliability***

An important objective for researchers is developing a replicable study with consistent results (Noble & Smith, 2015). This aim is difficult for qualitative research because the human participants may behave or respond differently during another data collection process (Hayashi Jr. et al., 2019). Another factor is that the observation techniques and competency of researchers may differ, leading to alternative results (Laumann, 2020). Although it is challenging to establish reliability in qualitative research, literature indicates that researchers can accomplish it through several strategies (Noble & Smith, 2015; Hayashi Jr. et al., 2020; Laumann, 2020).

**Audit Trails.** One strategy for establishing reliability is documenting accurately the research process for auditing (Noble & Smith, 2015). Bonello and Meehan (2019) suggest how a researcher can establish transparency and coherence for case study analysis by creating audit trails with NVivo software. One function of NVivo is allowing for writing memos at the node level in during the coding process. Maher et al. (2018) suggest that coding with NVivo provides researchers with the means for excellent data management and documentation. Annotating thoughts, insights, and obstacles within the coding process establishes the credibility of the

research process. Another function of NVivo the researcher used for creating an audit trail is the project mapping function. This function allows a researcher to explore visually the research processes, including discussion points and issues during the project. By creating a project map, the researcher will record observations, insights, and obstacles, providing future researchers a path for replicating the study leading to consistent results (Bonello & Meehan, 2019).

**Interview Guide.** Another method of obtaining external validity is developing an interview guide for transferability of the study (Laumann, 2020). As a data collection instrument, the interview guide facilitated response uniformity in the participants throughout the interview process (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). The researcher demonstrated how the similarities among the participant's narratives corroborated the interview guide's capability to produce consistent narratives for analysis. A strategy for obtaining reliability, the interview guide contributes to the value of the research project (Goodell et al., 2016; Kallio et al., 2016).

### ***Validity***

Designing a trustworthy research project necessitates strategies for obtaining internal and external validity (Hayashi Jr. et al., 2019; Laumann, 2020). In a multiple case study, tactics for internal validity were implemented during data collection and analysis, while external validity measures occurred during the research design (Yin, 2018).

**Internal Validity.** Strategies for obtaining internal validity are bracketing, data saturation, and reflexivity.

- *Bracketing* is a measure contributing to the validity of the data, occurring before the researcher begins the study (Yin, 2018). The first step in the bracketing process occurs when the researcher conducted a brainstorming session, creating a diagram of concepts and connections among the central themes of the research



project. During the field interviews, the researcher explored the influence of his preconceptions toward the answers of the participants. This interval validity measure allowed the researcher to identify, understand, and sequester his thoughts and bias during the research process (Collin & Stockton, 2018).

- *Data saturation.* Another measure for obtaining internal validity is achieving data saturation (Aguinis & Solarino, 2019). Interviews will continue until the generation of new themes and descriptions is no longer happening. Once this occurred, the researcher annotated the occurrence of data saturation in the field journal. The researcher will conduct several more interviews validating the achievement of data saturation.
- *Reflexivity.* Another method for obtaining internal validity is practicing reflexivity (Laumann, 2020). Reflexivity is the researcher's awareness of how his or her experiences and assumptions influence the research process (Cruz, 2015). During the interviews, the researcher documented his formed opinions, thoughts, and feelings about the participant's narratives in the field notes. The documentation allowed the researcher to exercise proper reflexive practices, providing insight into how his positionality influence the research processes. Communicating how the researcher's positionality influences the data collection, data analysis, and formation of suggestions increases the credibility of the study (Cruz, 2015). Reflexive practices improve the validity of the multiple case study.

**External Validity.** The researcher will obtain external validity through the two-step purposive sampling process and participant's review of the data.

- *Population representation.* One method of obtaining external validity is to clearly define the population of the study (Laumann, 2020). The researcher will use a two-step purposive sampling framework with inclusion and exclusion criteria for identifying and selecting participants representing the population. Van Hoeven et al., (2015) suggests purposive sampling is an appropriate strategy for identifying and selecting data-rich participants of the phenomenon.
- *Participant review.* The researcher transcribed the interviews into Word documents within 48 hours of concluding the interview. Each participants received a copy of his or her interview for reviewing and verifying the interpretive accuracy of verbal and nonverbal communications, and responded with a notification email detailing discrepancies or misinterpretations of communications within the transcripts, providing corrections and expansion of thoughts so the data reflected more accurately the participant's narrative of the phenomenon. This external validity process minimized the researcher's personal biases, improving the value of the data (Hayashi Jr. et al., 2019).

**Data Triangulation.** In qualitative research, data triangulation contributes to the reliability and validity of the data. The purpose of data triangulation is to explore the interrelationships among data sources, leading to the identification of agreeable themes through a coding process (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Laumann, 2020). Denzin and Lincoln (2018) suggested four types of categories for triangulating qualitative research: data, investigator, theory, and methodology. For this research project, data triangulation was the preferred method. This triangulation method requires a collection of data points from differing participants, allowing the researcher to gain multiple experiences and diverse narratives for validity.

To triangulate the data, the researcher first established three categories to characterize participants using the average weekly attendance of services: small, medium, and large. Another method of differentiating the participants was identifying them by their leadership positions of pastor, minister, deacon, or support staff. Similar themes and descriptions among the groups more likely represent the knowledge, skills, and abilities of church leaders in managing unique events and special operations. This data triangulation process will contribute to the reliability and validity of the research project.

### ***Summary of Reliability and Validity***

Research projects providing value to the literature will contain the critical elements of reliability and validity. Reliability demonstrates that other researchers can replicate the results of the study. Establishing validity, which has both internal and external components, illustrates that the research project is credible and transferable to other segments of the population. For accomplishing these objectives, the researcher will integrate processes of data triangulation, participants' review, audit trails, purposive sampling process, and obtain data saturation. Accomplishing these reliability and validity strategies will increase the value and trustworthiness of the research project.

### **Transition and Summary of Section 2**

The purpose of this research project is to explore the knowledge, skills, and abilities of church leaders in managing unique events and special operations in southeastern Virginia, Mississippi, and Texas. Section 2 details how the researcher will execute the research design and method of a qualitative multiple case study. Discussion of the responsibilities, actions, and expectations of the researcher defines his role within the research project. Another component of Section 2 details the criteria for the population, and the two-step purposive framework for

identifying participants. The data collection methods, detailing the instruments, the data analysis framework, and the researcher's procedure for generating themes and descriptions for the study. The final subsection of Section 2 describes the reliability and validity measures taken to execute a trustworthy and valuable study.

Section 3 summarizes the study, addressing the reasons for conducting the research project. This section will present the findings of the qualitative multiple case study, detailing the knowledge, skills, and abilities of church leaders in managing unique events and special operations. Section 3 also explores the themes and descriptions from the narratives and their relationships to the research questions, conceptual framework, and literature, details suggestions, and concludes with the significance of the study to professional practice.

### **Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change**

This section of the qualitative case study examined church leaders' knowledge, skills, and abilities in project management in their performance as business managers. This business management practice influences associated issues that nonprofit, religious institutions are experiencing with resource and human capital management. This section provides an overview of the research, the identification of themes from the interview process, the relationship of those themes to the research questions, and applications of themes to professional practice. The section concludes with recommendations and personal reflections of the researcher from the study.

#### **Overview of the Study**

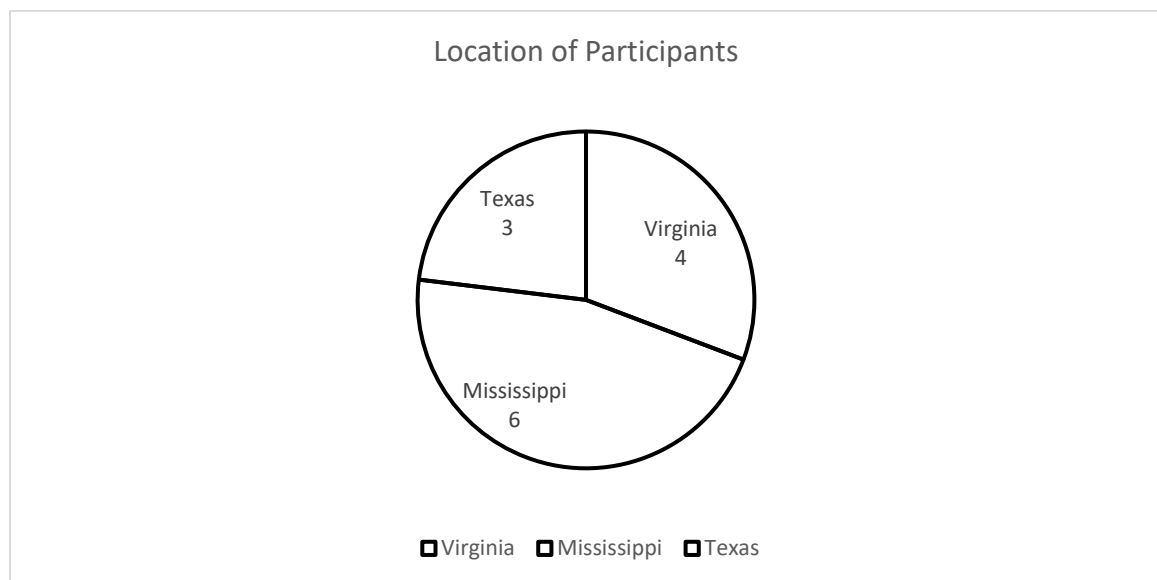
A multiple qualitative case study was conducted to assess church leaders' knowledge, skills, and abilities in project management. Initially, the researcher sought to assess the knowledge, skills, and abilities in project management solely of church leaders in southeastern Virginia. Given the lack of response in this geographic area, however, the researcher expanded the study to church leaders in the southern United States. Participants were from Virginia, Mississippi, and Texas (Figure 2).

After conducting a homogeneous selection process, the researcher distributed 120 recruitment emails to religious organizations in southeastern Virginia. Initially, 10 church leaders responded with interest to take part in the study. The researcher responded to the interested church leaders with the consent form and further details of the study. With this correspondence, the researcher conducted four interviews from participants in Virginia. Using Microsoft Excel, the researcher used the RANDBETWEEN () function to assign unique codes for identification. These unique codes are referenced for providing protection and privacy to the participants.

Not obtaining data saturation within the area chosen for the study, the researcher expanded the geographic region. The expansion of the geographic location led to a modification of the sampling method to a purposive sampling strategy. Participants meeting the inclusion criteria were solicited with a purposive sampling strategy in the states of Mississippi and Texas. Emails and phone calls were made to church leaders as initial contact for participation interest. Once the church leaders indicated a willingness, a consent form signed and the interview was scheduled and conducted. Initially, the researcher anticipated recruiting 20 to 30 subjects for study. After 10 interviews, the researcher made the assessment that data saturation had been obtained. Another three interviews were conducted to verify data saturation, leading to researcher to cease data collection.

**Figure 2**

*Location of Participants*



The researcher used three different data collection methodologies. Because of safety and security protocols, the researcher allowed the participant to select the data collection method with which he or she was most comfortable. Two participants opted to conduct in-person

interviews. Three participants selected videoconferencing interviews; however, because of technical difficulties, one had to switch to a telephone call. The final eight participants opted to conduct their interviews by telephone. Geographic location did not influence the data collection strategy, with participants selecting in-person interviews, video-conferencing, and telephone calls. During the interviews, the researcher took notes of participants' reactions, voice tones, and other speech rhythm for triangulation. For transcribing purposes, the researcher used a standard voice recorder for each interview.

**Table 1***Participant Information*

| Unique Code | Position             | Interview Length<br>(Minutes) | Attendees per Sunday  |
|-------------|----------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 40          | Elder                | 35                            | Average of 200        |
| 49          | Founder/Overseer     | 16                            | 150 (25 Virtual)      |
| 98          | Assistant Pastor     | 33                            | Approximately 900     |
| 85          | Elder/Superintendent | 33                            | Around 40             |
| 95          | Senior Pastor        | 21                            | Average of 200 to 250 |
| 14          | Pastor               | 16                            | 51 and Above          |
| 56          | Senior Pastor        | 30                            | 230 Average           |
| 44          | Senior Pastor        | 33                            | 275 to 300            |
| 83          | Pastor               | 31                            | 150 to 300            |
| 63          | Pastor               | 16                            | Around 150            |
| 88          | Senior Pastor        | 25                            | Around 275            |
| 17          | Pastor               | 39                            | 75 to 100             |
| 18          | Pastor               | 38                            | 35 to 50              |

The reliability and validity of the interviews were boosted through the participant's review of the transcripts. The researcher uploaded the audio files of the interviews to the Microsoft Word application at Microsoft.com; the online version of Microsoft Word automatically generated a transcription the audio files, which the researcher reviewed for formatting and clarification. Upon completing the review and updating the documents as needed, the researcher emailed the transcript to the participants for review. Upon receiving confirmation of the transcripts from the participants, the researcher loaded to documents into the NVivo software for analysis.

The researcher initially downloaded the NVivo software from Liberty University's software department. This research software allowed the researcher to analyze the data for emergent themes, validate data saturation, reduce bias, and establish an audit trail. With the notes from the interviews, the researcher triangulated the data for increased reliability. Emergent themes were developed from the data analysis.

During the data collection process, the researcher was thoughtful of reaching saturation. An integral element of a qualitative research study, saturation occurs when the data participants provide redundant information (Braun & Clarke, 2019). The anticipated number for this study was 20 to 30 participants; however, the researcher determined saturation occurred after only 10 interviews. For verification, the researcher conducted 5 more interviews to determine saturation. Upon analysis of these interviews, the researcher determined that no new themes were identifiable and the data were redundant. Research indicates that data saturation can indeed occur for qualitative research at 10 to 15 participants (Boddy, 2016; Fusch & Ness, 2015). After confidently determining saturation, the researcher ended data collection.



### **Presentation of the Findings**

During this research study, data analysis was conducted during and upon completion of the process. The analysis resulted in the identification of five emergent themes (Table 3). Open and axial coding of the interviews were the primary methods of data analysis. Using the research guide, the researcher interviewed 13 participants, who provided answers addressing the research questions for this study; this led to the emergent themes – planning, coordinating, organizing, commanding, and controlling.

### **Interpretation of the Themes**

This section presents the interpretation of the discovered emergent themes from the research.

#### ***Theme 1: Planning***

A primary theme each participant identified as important is the management function of planning. In the literature, White and Acheampong (2017) demonstrated that planning is influential in the execution of projects and normal business operations. The implications of their case also implied that planning positively affects other management functions. During the interview process, information gathered indicated the importance of planning unique events and special operations. Supporting the literature, analysis of the interviews indicated that planning activities influence other management functions of project management.

Answering questions from the interview guide led participants to identify planning activities of projects. One such activity is meeting with different stakeholders of the organization. Participant 49 noted the responsible committee would start discussing upcoming event ideally 6 months prior to their commencement. The meetings would identify methods of funding the activity and responsibilities. If possible, the committee would plan for donations or

conduct a fundraiser for the event. Participant 40 stated, “The senior leadership team would develop goals and objectives of the unique operation or special event before disseminating to the committee for planning.” Before project execution, the committee would report to the leadership team member assigned to oversee the event on how it would meet the objectives.

Participant 44 stated, “The committee would identify if the need [for] the project, research the community, what they can offer the community, funding of the project, and expected outcomes.” This planning activity supports literature demonstrating that strategic planning helps organizations obtain its vision and strategic objectives (Brosan & Levin, 2017; Gratton, 2018; Rustambekov & Unni, 2017). Participant 88 echoed the theme that, during planning activities, a committee would demonstrate a need for the mission in the community and present to the leadership team for execution. In the meeting, the committee will detail the plan of action for executing the project.

A difference among the participants’ answers was the involvement indicated by the senior pastor based on church size. Participants leading churches with fewer attendees and smaller congregations indicated they are more involved in the planning activities (P18, P17, and P98). Participant 18 stated “He is involved with the planning process 100% of the time and contributing to the project.” As church leader of a larger congregation, Participant 88 detailed how the planning activities occur within committees. Participant 98 answered questions by saying a separate committee plans for the organization, requiring him to align his department with those plans. The committee would submit the unique event or special operation through an assistant pastor to him for approval.

Implications from the answers are that church leaders demonstrated the knowledge, skills, and abilities for planning unique events and special operations. Participant 95 stated, “I

would gather key leaders and we would discuss activities, looking at the end goals, to visualize the final outcome, and what we would like to accomplish with the goals.” Participant 17 discussed similar processes with his committee leaders for planning unique events or special operations.

To summarize, the planning activities surrounding the unique event or special operation are essential for aligning the team toward accomplishing the objectives and goals of the project. The literature suggests that successful planning influences the other management functions. Implications from the interviews support conclusions from the literature regarding the importance of planning activities during project execution. Data from the interviews identified the importance of planning for unique events or special operations.

### ***Theme 2: Coordinating***

A second theme with demonstrated importance to the participants was coordinating the unique operations or special events. The current literature suggests a link between coordinating and planning activities for unique events or special operations (Chen et al., 2018; Garcia et al., 2018). In alignment with the literature, answers to questions about the planning management functions were in line with activities for the coordinating management function of unique events and special operations (P40, P44, and P56).

Coordinating consists of determining the schedule and sequence of activities (Voxtel, 2017). By coordinating the unique events and special operations, church leaders allocate appropriate resources, prioritize projects, and synchronize the workforce. In an answer about planning, Participant 89 details the development of the strategic, 5-year plan keeping the church for aimlessly performing unique events or special operations. Participant 61 answered, “That every year is started with a stewardship session.” The purpose of the meeting is to coordinate

with each committee from the departments to determine what programs they will conduct during the year for placement on the calendar. The coordinating activity allows the organization to assign and allocate resources for each event, aligning with the literature.

Participant 95 stated, “The pastors and elders develop a calendar for the church every year.” The purpose of the calendar is to align the events of the congregation and develop the budget. Another purpose for the calendar is that if a unique event or special operation arises during the year, the leadership team can review the calendar and make adjustments to resource allocation. This answer from the participant aligns with conclusions from the literature emphasizing the importance of coordination in project management (Garcia et al., 2018).

Throughout the interviews, participants emphasized the importance of establishing a yearly calendar for the organization. Participant 56 described the master calendar as the guiding doctrine for the organization for the year. The purpose of the calendar is to help with the coordination of the purpose-driven evangelism of the organization. Coordinating the unique operations and special events of faith-based organizations is particularly important because such organizations are especially likely to have limited resources and a volunteer workforce (White, 2020).

The conclusions from the responses that church leaders have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to coordinate unique events or special operations are in alignment with the current literature. Participant 85 detailed the importance of coordinating the events, especially for smaller congregations. Participant 63 echoed the importance by stating, “Myself and staff meet and discuss the plan for the year and put it together on the calendar.”

An opportunity inherent in the planning and coordinating emergent themes is improving the knowledge and skills of church leaders. The researcher noted that participants discussed

coordinating activities in response to planning questions. These perceptions align with current literature that suggests planning and coordinating activities are closely related. Further research can determine the influence of this misunderstanding between planning and coordinating activities are having on the performance of the organization in executing unique events or special operations.

To sum up, the management function of coordinating the unique operations and special events is vital for faith-based organizations because such organization typically must contend with limited resources and a volunteer workforce. The participants in this research project demonstrated the importance of coordination in their discussions of master annual calendars. Implications from the interview process support the conclusion of literature linking the coordinating function to successful project management.

### ***Theme 3: Organizing***

The third theme emerging from the interviews is the management function of organizing. In the interview guide, questions were posed to participants as to how they used resources for unique events or special operations. The literature suggests that the management function of organizing will allow faith-based organizations to accomplish their objectives despite limited availability of resources (Yip & Ainsworth, 2015; Barron, 2016). Data collected during the interview process suggests church leaders are organizing resources in alignment with the coordinating management function.

During interviews, participants provided answers indicating church leaders are not necessarily performing the organizing activities for unique events or special operations (P88 and P98). Several participants emphasized the importance of separating themselves from the role of managing resources (P40, P17, and P18). Participant 85 discussed how he allows his deacon to

perform as the custodian of the church's bank account. He often informs the deacon, "You are responsible for these duties and must meet the expectations for the job." Participant 14 echoed, "The chairperson is responsible for organizing the resources for the events of their committees."

Allocation of resources also occurs during the coordination of the events. Participant 40 stated:

The leadership team would assign resources to events during an annual planning meeting. Upon approval of the plan, the treasury would receive notice of the assigned amount for the unique event or special operations. Any requirement causing an increase in monetary resources would need approved by the treasurer and each member of the executive team. Participant 98 discussed receiving a budget for the department he was overseeing. Funding of projects came from that budget, but approval for the unique event or special operation required approval from the oversight committee. The responses indicate that church leaders, because they largely do not perform these activities themselves, have opportunities to improve their skills abilities in organizing activities.

Another element of this emergent theme is that while church leaders may not actively participate in organizing activities, they are monitoring the use of the resources. Participant 83 stated, "I review the bills and [am] on the bank account as pastor; however, I do not actively take part in monetary transactions." Participant 88 echoed this concept and discussed having monthly meetings with the financial committee to receive budgeting updates. The monitoring of the resources used for unique events or special operations indicate church leaders have knowledge of this emergent theme.

Several participants noted that the generation of resources for unique operations and special events were the responsibility of the overseeing manager or committee (P14, P83, and

P63). Participants 49 and 83 stated that committees would generate resources, organizing fundraisers and donations to fund projects. If these methods did not generate enough resources, the church would use general tithes and offerings. In the interview, Participant 89 empathically stated, “Pastors should not be involved with monetary oversight, saying it causes issues.” By having a committee or separate person organizing the monetary resources, the pastor will help the church accomplish the mission.

For special services with dinner, Participant 18 stated the expectation is for attendees to donate a food item. Participant 14 echoed that similar business practices occurred in his organization for unique events and special operations. Members would provide items, but the costs to the individual were not accounted in the total project cost.

Conclusions for the emergent theme are that church leaders have knowledge of coordinating themes, a finding in accordance with the current literature. Participants, although not actively organizing, discussed monitoring and verifying the resources of the projects (P95 and P98). The responsibility for organizing the activities was given to the committee or project leader. Because of this common practice among the participants, analyzing the leaders’ abilities and skills will require further research.

In short, organization is a management function for planning resource use for unique events and special operations. The literature demonstrates that the activities of organization align with coordination activities. Participants in the study affirmed that because of their positions, it was desirable for transparency’s sake to have a separate person or committee perform activities related to organizing. The primary resources under monitoring are monetary resources; other resources were not considered as important and not subjected to equivalent scrutiny.

***Theme 4: Commanding***

Another emergent theme arising from the interviews was the management function of commanding. This theme requires the church leader to have a thorough knowledge of the staff's and congregation's skills and abilities (Voxted, 2017). The literature demonstrates that in order to lead a volunteer workforce, church leaders need to practice the management function of commanding. Kang (2016) concluded from an exploratory study that church leaders who practice the management function of commanding can positively influence the participation of volunteers.

In the interview guide, questions were developed to help identify actions and behaviors related to the commanding management function. The aim of these questions was to gain perspectives and insights into the human resource management practices of church leaders. From the answers, three subthemes under the commanding management function were developed. The first subtheme is that identifying the knowledge, skills, and abilities of the congregation will lead to better performance in the volunteer workforce. Another subtheme is the lack of monitoring and management of the performance of volunteers by church leaders. A third subtheme of commanding is the need to acknowledge and reward the volunteer workforce. These subthemes support the conclusions from the literature review.

**Subtheme 1.** The first subtheme of commanding developed during the participants' interviews relates to identifying the knowledge, skills, and abilities of the volunteer workforce. The literature suggests an understanding of workers will lead to the development of trust and better performance (McManus & Mosca, 2015). Information obtained during the interviews supports current literature. Participant 95 stated, "Our church started a Church Growth Institute with the purpose of identifying and developing the spiritual gifts of the congregation."



Participant 14 emphasized: “Not only is it important for the leader to understand the knowledge and skills of the person, but understand the spiritual gifts of the individual.” Participant 44 echoed the importance of recognizing the spiritual gifts of the person because that person will represent the church in any interactions he or she has with the community. The practice of assigning people to job tasks based on spiritual gifts aligns with the literature on how church leaders differ from secular leaders.

The most prevalent methods of determining the knowledge, skills, and abilities of the person are through training and observation. Participant 14 and 88 discussed how, during indoctrination or orientation classes, new volunteers would fill out cards listing their occupations, skills, and abilities. Participant 61 detailed similar practices in his organization. Participant 18 stated, “Because of the small size of the congregation, I felt obligated to know and understand the members. I observe my congregation to help determine their skills and abilities.”

**Subtheme 2.** Many participants emphasized the importance of recognizing and rewarding the work of staff and the volunteering of attendees (P40, P44, P14, P64, P83, and P88). Methods of reward included public recognition during service and monetary gifts. The belief among the participants was that these practices helped attendees become more satisfied in volunteering, with an attendant increase in their services. This jibes with a study that indicated engaging leaders can increase the satisfaction of employees by making them feel valued (Luck & Leyh, 2017). Because churches rely on a mostly-volunteer workforce, the increase in perceived value can lead to higher commitment, helping the organization achieve its goals and objectives.

Participant 85 emphasized the importance of acknowledging the volunteer workforce. The participant likened his organization to a retail stores; a person may become frustrated with the store because of bad customer service, but then receives a reward from the organization

which influences the person to return. As a church leader, he felt strongly that rewarding volunteers for their work has similar results.

Participant 49 echoed these beliefs about rewarding the volunteer workforce of the church. The participant detailed how, during an annual dinner, the leadership team would publicly announce the work of patrons of the church. With the public acknowledgement, members of Participant 17's church would convey their feeling of value to the senior pastor. Participant 63 stated, "Although public acknowledgement is good, some people prefer no acknowledgement for their work. These are the ones church leaders must find other methods for displaying their appreciation for a job well done. This can include a private phone call or small monetary gifts." Participant 63 stated, "You definitely want to acknowledge the work of the congregation, keeping them working toward meeting the mission and vision of the organization."

**Subtheme 3.** The third subtheme of the commanding management function is monitoring the volunteer workforce. The interview guide contained questions seeking to gain insight into whether church leaders had methods of capturing the time a person volunteers during unique events or special operations. The literature indicates that a person who volunteers can become frustrated and stop if his or her expectations are not being met (Allen et al., 2018). Another reason for monitoring the volunteer's time is that the literature suggests a person can become frustrated with an organization if he or she believes the tasks being performed should be done instead by paid staff (Word & Park, 2015). Several participants, when asked this question, felt that they were not performing this element of commanding the workforce (P56 and P40). Participant 76 said the question aligns with issues and thoughts he had been having, reinforcing methods to add this to his practice.

Participant 83 stated, “We are not monitoring specifically the exact hours, but understand who is performing what tasks.” Participant 63 said, “My committee members and deacons informally tell me who is volunteering for projects.” Echoing the practices of other interviewees, Participant 56 answered, “We are not monitoring the work as well as we should, but it is important. The reason for its importance is to keep a person from burning out—but also to give others the opportunity to serve.”

These discussions from the participants support indications in the literature regarding church leaders’ performance of the activities of the commanding management function. The participants’ responses can lead to the conclusion that church leaders have the knowledge of the commanding function; However, the responses also indicate opportunities for improvement in the skills and abilities of church leaders in commanding the volunteer workforce.

In summary, the findings from the interview process support the literature review with regard to activities related to the management function of commanding. Because they work with a largely volunteer workforce, church leaders must identify the knowledge, skills, and abilities of the individuals who perform job tasks of unique events or special operations. The literature also suggests that recognition and appreciation activities by church leaders can improve retention among volunteers. An area of opportunity to improve volunteering lies in monitoring the work time and performance of individuals. Participants of the study identified this opportunity as important to help with human capital management.

### ***Theme 5: Controlling***

The theme prevalent throughout the interview process was the level of emphasis church leaders placed on the management function of controlling. Parker (2016) found that the management function of controlling assesses the organization’s weakness, errors, and deviation,

not leading toward the obtainment of organizational goals. The participants discussed meeting with church attendees and other leaders after completion of unique events or special operations to assess the outcome of the project (P83 and P85). The engagement of church leaders with the committees and congregation helps identify improvement opportunities in the execution of unique events or special operations, contributing to improvement of work performance of the volunteer workforce (Hanaysha, 2016). As a primary management function, controlling was an anticipated theme, aligning with ideas derived from current literature.

Questions posed in the interview guide prompted church leaders to detail controlling activities that took place during unique events or special operations. From the discussions, the participants made discerning efforts to assess the outcomes of projects. For the first subtheme, Participants 49 and 56 referenced the importance of assessing the results of unique events and special operations. One reason Participant 44 highlighted was the need to discern whether the project forged the connections with the community that the church was seeking. Participant 17 stated, “By assessing the outcome, the church can determine if further projects would be successful in the community.”

Participant 98 highlighted the importance of assessing the outcomes for alignment with the church’s vision and mission. “If any actions, [or] money spent, are not in alignment with our mission, they should not be happening,” stated Participant 40. Participant 98 stated that he allowed the person in charge of the event to conduct the assessment, and would discuss with him or her and the committee.

These narrative indicate that church leaders are performing controlling activities upon completing unique events or special operations. The participants provided responses indicating their knowledge, skills, and abilities in the management function of controlling (P44, P95, and

P98); they also identified an opportunity to improving their skills in this function. This aligns with findings in the current literature; this situation exists largely because of the lack of documentation or accountability in churches.

This section shows that the anticipated theme of controlling proved an important component for church leaders. Findings from the interview process supported findings of the literature review—that controlling activities help align unique events or special operations with the normal business operations of an organization.

### **Relationships among the Findings**

This section connects the conclusions with the research questions, conceptual framework, anticipated thoughts, research questions, and anticipated themes. The findings provided the foundation for the researcher to relate the conclusions of the study to the current literature. An analysis of the data allowed the researcher to relate the findings to the research questions, conceptual framework, literature, and problem.

### ***Relationship of Themes to the Research Questions***

Four primary research questions guided this qualitative research project. The emergent themes related to those research questions. The development of the interview guide provided prompts to obtain information and data to answer the research questions and develop implications for the study. The four primary research questions for the study were:

**RQ1.** How do local church leaders use their knowledge, skills and abilities to define a unique event or special operation so as to align it with the organization's vision and mission and integrate it into the organization's normal business practices and processes?

**RQ2.** How do local church leaders in Virginia, Mississippi, and Texas manage unique events or special operations to accomplish their objectives?

**RQ3.** How do local church leaders in Virginia, Mississippi, and Texas allocate resources for unique events or special operations?

**RQ4.** How do local church leaders in Virginia, Mississippi, and Texas develop and lead project teams to accomplish unique events or special operations?

The initial section of the research guide provided instructions to the researcher for developing a connection with each participant, detailing reasons for the study, and discussing expectations of the interview. With these instructions, the researcher established a positive relationship with each participant, allowing for a focus on data collection and addressing the research questions. An initial task of the interview guide was for the researcher to detail the management functions and definitions. These explanations provided an interpretive framework to help with answers provided by the participants. Section 1 also had general questions for the participants which, when answered, would provide opportunities for further analysis.

Part 2 of the interview guide was developed to address the research questions. Divided into three sections, this part of the guide was the primary data collection tool for the researcher. The first two sections each contained a primary question with five secondary questions. The secondary questions related to research questions RQ2, RQ3, and RQ4 and anticipated themes for the study. Section 3 of part 2 of the research guide addressed RQ1. Responses to the questions aligned with the anticipated themes, contributing to the current literature.

The emergent theme of the management function planning was addressed with secondary questions. One secondary question in the first section was “What planning activities occur to accomplish the unique event or operation?” Another secondary question for the planning theme was “Who helps with the planning activities for the project?” The results indicate that church leaders do not understand the management function of planning for specific projects. Participants

provided answers to this question as to the management function of coordinating (P85, P63, and P17). Because of the confusion with other management functions, further research is needed to determine whether church leaders have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to plan unique events and special operations.

The anticipated theme of coordinating was addressed with secondary questions in sections 2 and 3 of the interview guide. Participants noted several methods of scheduling and sequencing activities (P40, P88, P56, and P44). A common method was an annual meeting with staff members to develop the organization's plan for the upcoming year. In this meeting, any unique events or special operations were scheduled and placed on the calendar. Quarterly and unplanned meetings would occur when opportunities developed to serve the community or fellowship; new projects would be added to the calendar and personnel assigned to coordinate them on a rolling basis. Participants revealed a minimal concern with the anticipated theme of coordinating, responding to questions on the subject with answers that instead addressed planning activities. This misunderstanding led to the conclusion that further research is needed to determine whether church leaders have the knowledge of coordinating activities. The implications were positive that church leaders have the skills and abilities to execute coordinating activities for project.

Sections 2 and 3 of part 2 of the interview guide presented questions seeking to provide data for RQ2 and RQ3, concerning the anticipated theme of organizing. This management function requires church leaders to establish resource use during unique events and special operations. One question for this anticipated theme is "What normally constitutes a normal resource plan for a unique event or operation?" Responses to the questions on organizing prompted the conclusion that church leaders have knowledge of the management function of

organizing (P56 and P44). One potentially negative implication is that church leaders are not truly engaged with the organizing of resources for projects because they lack the skills or abilities. The literature appears to support this conclusion; therefore, further research is needed to address this theme.

Several questions in sections 2 and 3 addressed RQ4 and the anticipated theme of commanding. One of these questions is “Who is identifying the required skills and abilities of personnel needed to perform the activities of the unique event or special operation?” Responses corresponding to these interview questions positively indicate the knowledge, skills, and abilities of performing the commanding management function (P14, P83, and P63). Church leaders show an understanding that the workforce’s execution of activities related to the unique event or special operation requires the necessary competencies for performance. Current research supports these conclusions and minimal further research is needed.

The final anticipated theme of controlling was addressed with interview questions in sections 2 and 3. Integrated into RQ4, one question sought information related to this management function: “What activities occur for monitoring the use of physical and monetary resources?” The responses indicate opportunities for improvements among church leaders’ knowledge, skills, and abilities in this management function. Participants acknowledged their non-performance of the activities of the controlling function for either monetary or human resources (P40, P56, and P88). Current research supports the implication, with further research needed to determine best practices for improving the performance of church leaders’ controlling management function.

The final section of part 2 of the interview guide addresses RQ1, asking “How do you define a unique operation or special event to align with the organization’s vision and mission to



integrate into normal business practices and processes?” Integration into normal business operations is occurring, indicating the participants’ knowledge of its importance. However, the analysis suggests the lack of relevant skills and abilities is negatively effecting the performance of church leaders in executing this project management function. The results, corroborated by other interview questions, suggest that church leaders have opportunities to improve their knowledge, skills, and abilities for managing unique events and special operations, with further research needed.

### ***Relationship of the Themes to the Conceptual Framework***

The conceptual framework provides a systematic process for analysis of qualitative research (Mayer, 2015). Providing a rationale for the study, the fundamental concepts of servant leadership, steward leadership, and project governance are the conceptual framework for this qualitative study. Secondary concepts of the framework are knowledge, skills, and abilities. Linking the emergent themes with the conceptual framework guided the researcher in the processes of data collection and analysis. The linkage among the elements of the conceptual framework and the emergent themes supports the current literature.

**Servant Leadership.** Church leaders performing as servant leaders place a higher demand on developing the attendees of the religious institution (Thompson, 2015). With the objective of service to others, a holistic approach to work, a sense of community, and sharing of power in decision-making, servant leadership theory guided the researcher’s development of the interview guide (Eva, et al., 2018). The implications from the study contribute to the current literature and provide opportunities for church leaders to improve their performance as servant leaders.

The emergent themes developed from the participants' responses align with concepts of servant leadership theory. One thought from the study is the importance of developing the knowledge, skills, and abilities of attendees to complete unique events or special operations. Statements of the participants often emphasized the importance of church leaders identifying and developing the talents of others (P44, P95, and P56). This aligns with the servant leadership theory of fostering greatness in others instead of seeking self-interest (Allen et al., 2018). The management functions of organizing and commanding contribute to the performance of a leader in developing others (Voxted, 2017; Hatchuel & Segrestin, 2019). Participants' responses support the conceptual framework elements of servant leadership and emergent themes.

**Stewardship Theory.** The second concept of the conceptual framework is stewardship theory. Comprising two dimensions (psychological factors and situational factors), this concept entails church leaders performing so their congregation reaches its full potential and self-actualization (Nijhof et al., 2019). The emergent themes of commanding and controlling align with the psychological factors dimension of the stewardship theory. Planning, coordinating, and organizing activities helps church leaders perform as stewards in the situational dimension.

Implications from participants' responses indicate how the emergent themes of commanding and controlling align with performing as stewards. One conclusion is that the church leader will seek to motivate the volunteer workforce intrinsically (Hayek et al., 2015), providing rewards and recognition instead of financial compensation. This idea was common among the responses of participants (P14, P8, and P85). Another common function was the church leader's engagement with the congregatio to execute unique events and special operations (Dominguez-Escrig, et al., 2019). This response was more common for church leaders with small congregations (P85 and P14). Aligning with the literature, church leaders who gain the

knowledge, skills, and abilities of the emergent themes of commanding and controlling will perform as servant leaders.

Aligning with situational factors, participants' responses indicate that church leaders definitely seek to establish a culture that promotes value and cohesiveness (Davis, et al., 1997) (P95 and P98). The emergent themes of planning, coordinating, and organizing align with this element of the conceptual framework. Current literature supports these conclusions that the knowledge, skills, and abilities of planning, coordinating, and organizing unique events and special operations help church leaders perform as stewards of their organizations.

**Project Governance.** The final concept guiding this study is project governance. This third entity in our conceptual framework is defined by the structure and relationships that determine the performance and direction of an organization (Simard et al., 2018). One integral element of project governance is the development of internal mechanisms to ensure that unique events and special operations align with the objectives of the organization. Comprising two dimensions—project portfolio management and project internal processes—project governance helps organizations to legitimize, account for, and perform efficient projects (Brunet & Aubry, 2016). The emergent themes of the study align with these dimensions, contributing to the establishment of administrative and operational mechanisms for executing unique events and special operations within a religious organization.

Planning, coordinating, and organizing unique events or special requires organizations to legitimize the appropriateness of the process. Executing the activities of these emergent themes of the study aligns with the project portfolio management dimension. The participants discussed evaluating unique events, especially missions and community support, for alignment with the organization's vision (P88, P40, and P44). Because of limited resources (monetary, physical, and

human capital), the church leaders discussed ensuring the unique events align with the organization's vision and mission. The discerning actions taken are an aspect of project governance, allowing the church to select and execute unique events and special operations to accomplish its mission (Volden & Andersen, 2018).

The second dimension of project internal processes helps with establishing transparency and accountability in project execution (Volden & Andersen, 2018). During the interviews, multiple participants discussed policies that help create transparency and accountability in their organizations (P40, P44, P83, and P98). The prevalent method was to designate another person responsible for management of the fiscal and physical resources of the organization. Teams and departments submit funding requests to the financial person, who generates reports for the organization; the church leader oversees the process and monitors for discrepancies. These policies and processes embody the management function of controlling, aligning with project governance concepts.

Participants discussed the importance of the congregation and attendees in executing projects (P85, P49, and P56). The activities that occur when executing projects require internal and external relationships with the organization and community. Project governance helps establish these relationships and mitigate administrative and operational issues (Ligthart et al., 2016). Implementing this dimension requires the church leader to perform the management functions of commanding and controlling.

**Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities.** Execution of unique events and special operations requires knowledge, skills, and abilities (Mazzetto, 2019). The purpose of this study was to determine whether church leaders understood how their knowledge, skills, and abilities contribute to the management of unique events or special operations. Responses from the

participants show that opportunities exist to improve the knowledge, skills, and abilities of church leaders as project managers. This conclusion aligns with current research.

Another management function of which church leaders demonstrated minimal knowledge is the organization of resources. Participants discussed their reliance upon congregants to obtain and provide resources for unique events and special operations (P17, P85, and P63). The participants' responses indicated that opportunities to improve this management function exist, and would improve the execution of unique events and special operations. The management function of commanding showed similar findings; participants' responses and comments indicated minimal knowledge, skills, and abilities of performing commanding activities (P40, P18, and P14). Given limited resources and a volunteer workforce, these management functions are influential for completion of unique events and special operations.

The final implication of the study is that controlling activities occur within religious organizations. Participants indicated several methods of establishing these processes within their organizations (P40, P44, and P56). These findings suggest that church leaders have the knowledge, skills, and abilities of controlling. Finally, analysis of how the implications of the study relate to the research questions and conceptual framework was provided.

### ***Relationship of the Emergent Themes to the Anticipated Themes***

The existing literature identifies five potential themes related to church leaders and project management. The first anticipated theme is the importance of planning for church leaders in managing the unique operations and special events of a religious organization. Faith-based institutions with solid planning strategies experience success in operations. Leaders of churches who do not plan properly contribute to the organization's failure to achieve its strategic goals and vision. In the present study, it was expected for participants to detail planning activities and

responsibilities for projects. The identification of improvement opportunities in planning activities is the aim of the analysis in the participant's responses.

Another anticipated theme is the project management concept of coordinating. Given limited resources, the timing of unique events and special operations is critical for church leaders. This management function is influential because of the volunteer workforce of religious organizations. The anticipated expression of this theme is coordination by church leaders to influence the performance of project teams in accomplishing the objectives pertaining to unique events and special operations.

The management function of organizing is the third anticipated theme. Organizing different projects allows church leaders to manage the volunteer workforce and allocate the scarce resources of religious organizations. In this research project, the anticipation is that church leaders have processes for organizing the unique operations and special events of the religious institutions. By organizing projects, church leaders can monitor the use of resources in accomplishing the goals of the endeavor.

Commanding—another project management function—is the fourth anticipated theme for this qualitative study. The mission and vision of faith-based organizations is specific and demanding; the performance of the workforce is influential on the accomplishment of the vision and mission. The job tasks related to unique operations and special events will require the church leader to understand the knowledge, skills, and abilities of the volunteer workforce so as to assign them to appropriate tasks. This anticipated theme helps church leaders engage with the volunteer workforce, influencing the accomplishment of the objectives.

The final anticipated theme for this study is the management function of controlling. Because of their mission and vision, religious institutions will execute unique operations and

special events aligning with their business operations and functions. A misalignment of these business practices can cause issues for the church, leading to negative implications for the church leader and attendees. By controlling the scope, objectives, and outcomes of the unique events and special operations, church leaders ensure the alignment of the projects with the church's normal business goals and objectives.

### ***Relationship of the Themes to the Literature***

A focused analysis of the literature revealed similarities and differences with the findings of this study.

In response to the research questions, common methods for assessing the knowledge, skills, and abilities of the congregation were observation and inventory. Several participants discussed the importance of the calling, or a recognition of the spiritual gift to guide and lead unique events or special operations (Krishnakumar et al., 2015; Vann, 2015) (P44, P56, and P88). Aligning with the literature, participants stated the calling—along with other knowledge, skills, and abilities—is essential. Religious organizations consider the calling a prerequisite for a person to become a pastor; similarly, church leaders require people to evince similar characteristics and behaviors to lead unique events and special operations.

Participants affirmed the importance of developing and communicating their strategy and vision (P88 and P44). Responses related to the development of planning and coordinating link these emergent themes with the literature. The strategy and vision of an organization grows out of the leader developing and communicating an action plan for accomplishing the mission and strategic goals (Breed, 2019; Eguizabal, 2018, White & Acheampong, 2017). When discussing the planning and coordinating themes, leaders recounted developing calendars detailing the church's unique events or special operations. The development of these calendars, created in

collaboration congregants, considered internal factors of resources (physical, monetary, human), external factors (technology, regulations), and current operations (Chavez & Eagle, 2016; Munday et al., 2019; Thiessen et al., 2018). One external factor influencing normal operations and projects is the current pandemic. Aligning with the literature, participants discussed having to adjust their current operations, unique events, and special operations with the objectives of accomplishing the organization's goals (P44).

Current literature also implicates innovation and resilience as important factors for leaders. Innovation leads to renewing operations, shifting approaches and modifying practices (Harrison, 2019). In the pandemic environment, the participants discussed having services online (P95, P98, and P17). The change required participants to adjust normal processes, addressing congregation in the building and viewers of the online platforms. Literature indicates resiliency leadership factor contributes to the modifying and adjusting to overcome issues and adversities. Participant's responses suggests during the current environment, the development of plans and actions were instrumental in adapting the operations of the organization (P83, P85, and P56).

Another similarity between the current literature and the emergent themes is the assessment of church leaders' performance as business managers. Participants' responses touched on activities and actions aligning with indications of the current literature on how business managers perform (Kessler & Kretzschmar, 2015) (P44, P14, and P17). Areas of responsibility that both the literature and participants identify as important are human resource management, accounting, and financial management. Responses by the participants indicate performance in these areas can help the organization accomplish its mission and objectives.

The findings of this study support the literature with regard to issues relating to the management of the volunteer workforce. Participants discussed the importance of the concepts;



however, several admitted that improvement opportunities exist in managing the workforce (P40, P44, P83, and P17). This specifically aligns with current literature indicating that church leaders lack training and education concerning human capital management (Krishnakumar et al., 2015).

Indications from the study align with current literature concerning financial and accounting practices. The participants' responses indicate an overall lack of skills and abilities in this management function (P40, P98, and P63); the general practice among the participants was to rely on other individuals for performing these functions was. The literature indicates that church leaders' inexperience in accounting and financial management contributes to performance issues within their organizations (Foohey, 2015; Cafferata, 2017).

During their discussions, the participants described projects identified in current literature: community, elders programs, special programs, and construction (P56, P88, and P18). Management and execution of these programs were identified as important functions of the church for furthering the vision and mission of the organization. These indications align with current literature of the importance of projects in helping organizations accomplish their strategic goals. The similarities of the participants' responses and the current literature indicate the contribution of the research to the body of knowledge for church leaders and project management.

A final similarity between the current literature and participants' answers lies in the topic of risk management when executing unique events or special operations. The literature indicates risk management consists of identifying, analyzing, and minimizing potential issues with potential to affect negatively the progress of the project (Cagliano et al., 2015). The value of executing the project for the organization is another element of risk management (Haq et al., 2018). The participants detailed the importance of performing unique events or special

operations in helping the church accomplish its objectives (P63, P14, and P63); specifically, outreach programs or community events were evaluated to ensure alignment with the church's vision, mission, and objectives. The participants, aligning with current literature of project management, deemed these risk management practices necessary.

A difference between the literature and the findings of this study lies in the definition of church leaders. After reviewing the literature, the researcher defined church leaders in the categories of pastors (elders) and deacons. In the introductory letter, the researcher clearly articulated this definition when soliciting potential participants. During direct phone calls for participation, the researcher also provided the definition of church leaders. However, respondents to the letter and conversations for identifying participants indicated that only pastors or elders should be considered church leaders for the purposes of this study. Conclusions from the researcher had from the participants' responses are deacons are managers within organizations, not necessarily leaders of the organization.

Participants also noted that committee chairpersons are important managers in the church (P88, P40, and P98). The duties and job tasks of the chairperson include managing the people, functions, and responsibilities of the committee. Interpretation of the literature led to the researcher defining chairpersons as church leaders. This differences between the literature and the emergent themes support recommendations for further studies (see below).

### ***Relationship to the Problem***

Emergent themes of this study relate to how the knowledge, skills, and abilities of church leaders help with the performance of their organizations in performing unique events or special operations. Participants in the study indicate they possess knowledge of managing unique events or special operations. Participants detailed performing activities related to planning and

coordinating the unique events or special operations (P88, P56, P18, and P44). The literature emphasizes the importance of these management functions in project management.

Indications from the study are that church leaders possesses some of the skills necessary to perform as managers of unique events or special operations. Participants' responses detailed non-performance of some elements of the organizing, commanding, and controlling management emergent themes (P85, P98, and P17). The lack of experience performing these functions is supported in the literature; the implication is that church leaders have not developed their skills in resource and human capital management, leading to challenges for their organizations in accomplish their goals.

With participants indicating that they did not perform certain functions of the themes organizing, commanding, and controlling, we may conclude that they lack abilities in these tasks (P14, P63, and P49). Another conclusion could be that church leaders may not have the knowledge of the themes to perform the related duties; therefore, the participants rely on members of the organization for help. (This conclusion informs the recommendations for further study, below.)

### ***Summary of Findings***

During the review of current literature, five anticipated themes were identified. These themes were the management concepts of planning, coordinating, organizing, commanding, and controlling. Findings of the study led to the development of implications relating to the emergent themes. The first implication is that church leaders have the knowledge, skill, and ability for coordinating unique events and special operations. Based on the participants' interviews, a common process among faith-based organizations is establishing a calendar (P40, P44, P98, P95, and P56), the purpose of which is to plan and track the business operations, unique events, and

special operations of the organization. During the year, coordinating activities would occur that would modify and add activities to the calendar.

Another finding of the study concerned knowledge of planning activities for projects. Participants' responses and comments suggested that planning activities occur for the unique events or special operations (P88, P56, and P44). However, the participants' answers suggest that the planning activities were performed by individuals or committees who report to the church leader, rather than the leader personally (P85, P95 and 40). This indicates the participants are not actively involved in the planning activities; thus we can assume they have minimal skills and abilities in this management theme. This suggestion also indicates that further research is needed to determine the church leaders' skills and abilities related to the emergent theme of planning.

Another management function of which church leaders evinced minimal knowledge is the organizing of the resources. Participants discussed their reliance upon the congregation to obtain and provide resources for unique events and special operations (P17, P18, and P85). Indications from the participants' responses were that opportunities to improve this management function exist and would improve the execution of unique events and special operations. Similarly, the management principle of commanding had similar implications. Participants' responses and comments indicated minimal knowledge, skills, and abilities of performing commanding activities (P44, P14, P63, and P56). Given limited resources and a volunteer workforce, these management functions are influential for completion of unique events and special operations.

The final implication of the study is that controlling activities occur within religious organizations. Participants indicated several methods of establishing these processes within their organizations (P40, P49, P88, and P95). These findings suggest that church leaders have the

knowledge, skills, and abilities associated with controlling. Further analysis helped establish the relation of the themes to the research questions, conceptual framework, anticipated themes, current literature, and study problem. This analysis of the themes led to the development of further research opportunities, performance opportunities for church leaders, and reflections by the researcher.

### **Applications to Professional Practice**

After reviewing the current literature, the researcher conducted this study to contribute to the body of knowledge related to church leaders acting as business managers. Studies examining the performance of nonprofit leaders are prevalent in the current body of literature; however, there is a demonstrated need for more research pertaining to project management discipline. Implications from this study should improve performance of church leaders as business managers. Implications from this study can also apply to other nonprofit entities for project management. This section of the research study discusses the implications and how applying them could improve project management practices.

### ***Improving Project Management Practice***

Participants contributed information and data that revealed five emergent themes. Each theme embodies general management concepts, and each encompasses activities directly aligned with the project management life cycle. Integrating the principles of the study into the project life cycle could improve project management practices.

The first phase of the project life cycle is initiating or developing a business case, addressing a specific problem, or obtaining an opportunity (Zwikael & Meredith, 2018). Actions in this phase include developing the project, selecting a project manager, and developing the team. The emergent theme coordinating activities supports this phase. When performing

coordinating activities, the participants would determine if opportunities for projects existed in the community, need for a celebration, or an opportunity to raise capital through unique events or special operations. Detailing the business cases by developing a problem statement, objectives, and potential solutions or outcomes could improve the performance of the project team (Ssegawa & Muzinda, 2018).

During the initiating phase, the organization will identify the project manager. This person guides the project team and managing the resources. The emergent theme from the study that contributes to the performance of these activities is commanding. As church leaders select the project manager, an assessment of the knowledge, skills, and abilities of the congregation is necessary for determining the leader (Kloppenborg & Tesch, 2015). The commanding theme also supports the project leader in selecting the team for executing the project.

Planning is the second phase of the project life cycle, having similar concepts to several of the emergent themes. In the planning phase, the project manager will develop a resource allocation plan, create a schedule, and develop the project metrics (Pellerin & Perrier, 2019; Pinha & Ahluwalia, 2019). From the participants' responses, the emergent theme of coordinating and organizing is seen to align with the actions in the planning phase. Specifically, church leaders sought to develop specific deliverables for unique events or special operations to align with their organization's vision and mission.

The third phase of the project life cycle is executing the unique event or special operation. During this phase, the deployment of human, physical, and monetary resources occurs (PMI, 2017). There are activities related to each emergent theme that can contribute to the success of the church leader in this phase. The study and the current literature suggest that the commanding theme is highly influential. Ke et al. (2015) posited that the quality of the manager

directly influenced the performance of the team. Implications from the study and current literature suggest commanding activities could help church leaders guide project teams during the execution of unique events and special operations.

After the execution phase of the life cycle, the project manager will control and monitor the resource use and budget. Through monitoring resource use, the project manager increases the value of the project (Pellerin & Perrier, 2019). An essential element in this phase is the comparison of budgeted expenses to actual costs. In the current study, participants indicated these activities align with the emergent theme of controlling. Another emergent theme contributing to this phase is organizing. Participants indicated that resource plan development occurs when creating a budget for comparison.

The last phase of the project life cycle is closing. In this phase, the project ends and a review of outcomes is conducted (Kloppernborg & Tesch, 2015; PMI, 2017). An integral part of this phase is providing recognition for the team and discussing improvement opportunities for future projects (Gomes et al., 2018). Emergent themes from the study contributing to this phase are the management principles of commanding and controlling. Participants emphasized the importance of acknowledging contributors to the unique events or special operations in their organizations. Indications from the study were that controlling activities included assessing and documenting the outcomes of the project. The responses of the participants aligned these activities with the processes of the closing phase of the life cycle (PMI, 2017). Applying the implications from the study could improve the project management practices of church leaders when executing unique operations and special events.

***Improving General Business Practice***

The research study revealed five themes relating to business management for church leaders. Application of these themes influences the performance of church leaders as business managers. The current literature suggests that improvement as business managers can improve the performance of churches as part of the nonprofit industry. This section of the study discusses the implications and implementation of suggestions that could improve general business practices.

The current literature indicates that managing human capital presents a challenge for church leaders (Burge & Djupe, 2015; Dougherty et al., 2015; Polson & Gillespie, 2019). One challenge for church leaders in managing the volunteer workforce is the increasing diversity within religious organizations (Wong et al., 2019). Increasing diversity requires greater attentiveness to the knowledge, skills, and abilities of the congregation. By acquiring knowledge, skills, and abilities within the commanding theme, church leaders could improve their human capital management practices. This improvement will address another issue raised in the current literature: a lack of training and education among church leaders (Word & Park, 2015). Participants of the study indicated this issue during their interviews. Seeking to gain an understanding of the commanding theme can improve the business practices of church leaders.

The current literature indicates that church leaders face challenges in accounting and financial management. In 2015 alone, an estimated \$46 billion were lost among Christian churches worldwide due to fraud, waste, and abuse (Johnson et al., 2015). The literature suggests that one reason for these challenges is that church leaders lack education and training in accounting and financial management (Cafferata, 2017; Foohey, 2015). Indications from the current study support this suggestion. The study implies that the acquisition of the knowledge,



skills, and abilities of the emergent themes of planning, coordinating, organizing, and controlling could improve the performance of church leaders' accounting and financial management.

A third challenge indicated by current literature is the management of normal business operations by church leaders. Studies indicate that flourishing religious organizations have clarity of mission, vision, and values guiding their business operations (Dantis, 2015; Tkaczynski et al., 2017). Religious organizations that face challenges in their normal business operations are negatively affected (Dunaetz, 2019; Haskell, Flatt, & Burgoyne., 2016). Data from the study support these conclusions developed from the research. Church leaders who pursue the knowledge, skills, and abilities indicated in the emergent themes could improve their performance in managing the normal business operations of their organizations. The results of the study could thus improve general business practices of church leaders prompting them to gain the knowledge, skills, and abilities to manage unique events or special operations.

### ***Summary of Applications to Professional Practice***

The results and implications of this study contribute to the current body of knowledge around church leaders and project management. The data can also be applied to improving the general business practices of church leaders. Such improvement opportunities could occur when church leaders seek to gain knowledge, skills, and abilities related to the emergent themes of planning, coordinating, organizing, commanding, and controlling unique events or special operations.

### **Recommendations for Action**

Based on the implications from the study, recommendations for action were developed aligning with the applications to professional practice. These proposals, considering the current body of knowledge as references, are ideas to improve the performance of church leaders in

managing unique operations and special events. Implementing these recommendations could improve the performance of church leaders as business managers. Implementing these suggestions would also align with the conceptual framework elements of servant leader and stewardship. This section discusses the recommendations for action.

The first recommendation is for church leaders to seek opportunities to increase their knowledge of the emergent themes from the study. Participants in the study discussed furthering their educations through higher learning institutions. The primary pursuit or objective is to become more knowledgeable about biblical teachings and theories. This pursuit of knowledge could help the person become a better leader. Because of the challenges of the business management aspect of being a church leader, pursuing knowledge in planning, coordinating, organizing, commanding, and controlling unique events and special events could contribute to the leadership potential of the church leader. Christian universities offer courses of study that integrate learning about business management with biblical theories.

Another recommendation for action is to develop the skills necessary to manage the business operations of an organization; specifically, the church leader should seek opportunities to develop his or her skills in managing unique operations and special events. Church leaders can seek opportunities in secular businesses to accomplish this recommendation. Another method for obtaining training is to attend classes leading to accreditation in project management or similar disciplines. Higher education institutions offer preparatory classes to students, and the instruction guides students through a controlled project; qualified students are then eligible for certification. The development of skills in a learning environment could improve the performance of church leaders in managing unique operations or special events.

The third and final recommendation for action is that church leaders should seek opportunities to develop their abilities in managing unique events or special operations. One method would be to work with an executive coach for managing projects within their own organization. Feedback is valuable in the development of the church leader's abilities. Another strategy would be to seek on-the-job training from another church leader who has demonstrated the required knowledge, skills, and abilities. This partnership could further advance the message of Jesus Christ by improving the performance of church leaders. Implementing these recommendations for action by church leaders could improve their performance as business managers.

### **Recommendations for Further Study**

Replicating this study among different denominations of Christian churches might provide new insight into the research questions. Because of the training requirements and education opportunities for different denomination, a comparison of project management expertise between church leaders could contribute to the current body of knowledge. A second recommendation for further study is assessing the knowledge, skills, and abilities of church congregants, as opposed to leaders; several participants indicated that individuals or committees plan and execute unique events or special operations. A study capturing the knowledge, skills, and abilities of these individuals could further improve the performance of churches.

Another recommendation for further research is a comparison of the knowledge, skills, and abilities of business management between church leaders who have other jobs outside the church and those who are full-time pastors. The findings from such research could confirm the general implications of the study's findings. A final recommendation for future studies would be to interview other entities in the nonprofit sector, as identified in section 2 of this study; the

literature suggests these organizations are experiencing challenges similar to those of church leaders, and a comparison of the different nonprofit leaders' business management practices could provide insight to improve the performance of church leaders. These recommended further studies pose opportunities to contribute to the current body of knowledge of church leaders and project management.

### **Reflections**

This qualitative research project allowed the researcher to reflect on various aspects of the Christian worldview in the workplace. During these reflections, personal and professional growth opportunities were identified. Discussions with the church leaders led to reflections on the biblical applications of the study's findings. This section discusses these reflections and the application of the findings toward the Christian worldview.

### ***Personal Growth***

The progress of this project allowed an opportunity for personal growth for the researcher. Initially, the researcher had minimal challenges during the research process. With the onset of the pandemic, though, the researcher had to overcome limited participation and access to participants. These adjustments not only helped the researcher understand the difficulties of conducting research, but also provided motivation for further research opportunities. Another area of personal growth arising from the research project for the researcher was a greater understanding of techniques and insights from church leaders. As a leader in secular jobs, the researcher gained insight and techniques from the participants that apply to his leadership style.

When interviewing, the researcher gained more perspective on the Christian worldview from church leaders. This growth was more prevalent with Christian leaders who worked in secular jobs while leading a congregation. The challenges and time management issues of these

individuals gave the researcher insight into the difficulties of their positions. The personal growth from the research project also contributed to the professional growth of the researcher.

### ***Professional Growth***

The researcher experienced professional growth during this research project. Most notably, the researcher gained more insight into and understanding of project management concepts and theories. This growth can help the researcher, as a project manager in his organization, to guide the organization to obtain the objectives under his management. Another professional growth opportunity is becoming more knowledgeable about business concepts. The researcher, who is responsible for managing the operations budget for his organization, has improved his performance because of the acquisition of knowledge when conducting the research.

### ***Biblical Perspective***

The application of biblical principles to the emergent themes helped the researcher align them with the conceptual framework. This analysis process contributed to the Christian worldview of the researcher, ensuring a more comprehensive study. Each emergent theme was addressed in the Bible, guiding the performance of church leaders.

The first emergent theme was the management principle of planning. In performing planning activities, church leaders are creating opportunities for a coherent, functional organization to accomplish the church's vision, mission, and strategic objectives. In the book of Jeremiah, the writer details God's communication of his plan to his followers (Jer. 29:10). Moses details several plans given to him by God from leading the children out of Egypt to a succession plan of Joshua (Exod. 7; Josh. 1). Proverbs 21:5 states, "The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance, but everyone who is hasty comes only to poverty." As church leaders seek

knowledge, skills, and abilities of planning, these verses along with others give insight on the importance of this emergent theme.

Coordinating is the second emergent theme with biblical principles. One example of coordination of resources in the Bible was the Israelites' occupation of the Promised Land. This major operation required Joshua to instruct and govern the resources (Joshua 15). Another example of coordinating of resources led to positions of deacons; faced with increasing demands on their time, the apostles had the church select men as deacons to help with certain tasks (Acts 6:3). An implication of the study is that coordination of events is essential to project management. In the book that bears his name, Nehemiah provides a biblical perspective on coordinating activities for rebuilding the Temple. The execution of this process aligns with the project governance concept of the conceptual framework for this study.

In his teachings, Jesus discusses the importance of accounting for resources when executing projects (Luke 14:28). He states, "For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it?" This biblical verse aligns with the emergent theme of organizing. In the book of Genesis, Joseph develops a plan to organize the resources of Egypt so as to allow the country to survive seven years of famine. His performance as a business manager and his obedience to God's direction led him to become an important leader. The stewardship concept of the conceptual framework supports this biblical principle for managing resources.

The fourth emergent theme is commanding, the management principle for the management of people. In his teachings, Jesus discusses how leaders should serve others for the betterment of their organizations (Matt. 20:25–28; Mark 9:32–37). In Philippians 2:3, Paul states, "Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than

yourselves.” This verse aligns with the conceptual framework elements of this of servant leadership.

The final emergent theme of the study is the management concept of controlling. Activities in this category are defined by monitoring the processes of an organization for goal accomplishment. The construction of the Temple by King Solomon shows the controlling management function (1 Kings). By monitoring the resources and work of the project, Solomon led the successful completion of this project. Church leaders can pattern their projects on the works of Solomon for controlling the unique events or special operations of their organizations. The conceptual framework elements support the management function of controlling. Aligning the emergent themes with biblical perspectives could improve the performance of church leaders in managing unique events or special operations.

### **Summary and Study Conclusion**

The general problem of this study was determining whether church leaders possess the knowledge, skills, and abilities to manage unique events or special operations. Specifically, church leaders in Virginia, Mississippi, and Texas were interviewed as to whether they had the knowledge, skills, and abilities to manage unique events and special operations. A qualitative multiple-case study was performed for this project. Twelve church leaders were interviewed either in person, by telephone, or by videoconferencing. Each interview was recorded, transcribed, and coded to reveal emergent themes. The analysis of the current literature led to the development of five anticipated themes: planning, coordinating, organizing, commanding, and controlling. Emergent themes from the interviews supported the anticipated themes for this study. As the emergent themes became consistent among the interviews, the researcher determined saturation was reached after 13 interviews.

The conceptual framework directed the research of this project. Concepts underpinning the framework were servant leadership, stewardship, and project governance. The relationship between the conceptual framework and the emergent themes aligns with current literature supporting the implications of the study. Further researcher projects were identified that might possibly contribute more information to current literature on church leaders and project management.

Finally, reflections were provided by the researcher detailing personal and professional growth relating to the project. The results of this study indicated opportunities to improve the performance of church leaders as project and business managers. Aligning the emergent themes with biblical principles provided support for how these concepts could improve the performance of church leaders. In closing, this qualitative multiple-case study contributes to the body of knowledge of church leaders and project management.



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**Appendix A: Recruitment Email**

[Date]

[Recipient]

[Company]

[Email address]

Dear [Recipient]:

As a graduate in the School of Business at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The purpose of my research is to explore the knowledge, skills, and abilities of church leaders within southeastern Virginia who have had experience managing unique events and operations as means to understand how to improve the performance of church leaders as business managers, and I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be a leader of church in southeastern Virginia and responsible for managing unique events or operations for their organization. For this study, a church leader is a person performing or identifying as pastor, minister, deacon, elder, or any other title responsible for managing the business activities of the organization. If you self-identify as a church leader, manage unique events or operations, and are willing to participate, I invite you to complete the included screening survey. After completing the survey, please return to be added to the list of candidates at email [REDACTED] within 7 business days of receipt.

A random selection process will occur to select candidates for an interview. Your name, leadership position, and other identifying information will be requested as part of your participation, but the researcher will implement security measures to protect your confidentiality.

For the interview, an audio recording device will be used to record the information for analysis. The interview will last 45–60 minutes and will be conducted using a video chat or in a private location that is convenient for the interviewee. I will also be taking notes, using a field journal, of any reactions or emotions during the interview.

After completion of the interview, the researcher will transcribe the content into a Microsoft Word document within 2 business days. I will email a copy of the document to you for review and clarification. In reviewing the document, please note any misinterpretations of verbal and nonverbal communication. After completing the review, please return to me at my email [REDACTED] the notations within 3 business days.

To be considered for participation, please return the screening survey to me at [REDACTED]. If you are selected for an interview, I will notify of the selection and email you a consent document. The consent document, which will contain additional information about my research, which will need to be signed and returned to me before or at the time of the interview.

If you have further questions regarding my research or would like to participate in the study, please respond to this email within 7 days.

You are more than welcome to send this invitation to any other qualifying individuals you believe would be interested.

Sincerely,

Booker Mitchell  
Student, School of Business, Liberty University



**Appendix B: Screening Survey**

1. What leadership role do you possess or perform within your organization?

☐ Pastor   ☐ Elder   ☐ Deacon   ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Are you serving as a volunteer or receiving compensation?

☐ Volunteer   ☐ Compensation

3. Is this your primary occupation?

☐ Yes   ☐ No

If no, can you provide your primary occupation? \_\_\_\_\_

4. What is your age?

☐ 18–20   ☐ 20–29   ☐ 30–39   ☐ 40–49   ☐ 50–59   ☐ 60+

5. Please select your highest education level obtained:

☐ High School Diploma   ☐ Some college or technical training

☐ Bachelor Degree   ☐ Master Degree   ☐ Doctoral Degree

6. Please indicate the average attendance of your church service(s) on Sundays. If you have multiple services, please combine the attendance for each service for total average.

☐ 1–99   ☐ 100–499   ☐ 500 plus

Note: Participation in this study is strictly voluntarily with no compensation to given. If the researcher has a high number of respondents, each candidate will be assigned a random number for inclusion in random selection process. After the random selection process, the researcher will contact the participants for scheduling the interview. Thanks for your time in supporting my opportunity to further my education and knowledge.

## Appendix C: Interview Guide

### I. Introduction

- A. **Establish Interactive Connection.** My name is Booker Mitchell and I am doctoral candidate at Liberty University. One of the requirements for obtaining my DBA is completing a research project, for which I have chosen the topic of Project Management and Church Leaders. Information from the invitation letter and prescreening survey has led me to select you as a possible candidate for the study. First and foremost, thank you for your time and support in helping me meet the requirements for my degree. Do you have any questions before we begin?
- B. **Purpose.** The purpose of this research project is to explore the knowledge, skills, and abilities of church leaders in managing unique events or operations and their influence toward the church in accomplishing its mission and objectives.
- C. **Motivation.** My purpose for completing this project is accomplishing my educational goal of a doctorate. Another reason for completing this project is that as a Christian, I would like to identify opportunities for the improvement of church leaders in their performance as business managers and project leaders.
- D. **Privacy and Security Measures.**
- E. **Timeline.** This interview should last approximately 45–60 minutes. Are you ready to respond to some questions at this time?
- F. **Terminology.** During the interview, I will reference stakeholders, which are individuals having an interest in the performance of the church. Stakeholders can be internal (pastors, deacons, members, attendees) or external (business partners, charitable organizations, missionaries).

Transition into main interview

### II. Body

#### A. General Information

1. What is your position at your church?
2. What is the approximate number of attendees for your church on Sunday?
3. How often do you perform as a business manager in your organization?

- B. (Primary) How do you define a unique event or special operation to align with the organization's vision and mission to integrate into normal business practices and processes?
- C. (Primary) How often do you manage unique events or special operations for your organization?
  - 1. (Secondary) What planning activities occur to accomplish the unique event or special operation? Who participates with these activities?
  - 2. (Secondary) How does your organization coordinate the schedule and sequence the activities of the unique event or special operation?
  - 3. (Secondary) How does the organization of resources occur with internal and external stakeholders?
  - 4. (Secondary) What is the process of identifying the required skills and abilities of personnel needed to perform the activities of the unique event or special operation?
  - 5. (Secondary) How does the monitoring of activities and outcomes of the unique events and special operations occur?
- D. (Primary) How do you allocate resources for a unique event or special operation?
  - 1. (Secondary) What normally constitute a normal resource plan for a unique event or special operation?
  - 2. (Secondary) How does the resource plan schedule and prioritize resources for unique events and special operations?
  - 3. (Secondary) What organization of resources occur during the execution of unique events and special operations?
  - 4. (Secondary) What activities occur for monitoring the physical and monetary uses of resources?
- E. (Primary) How do you develop and lead teams to accomplish a unique event or special operation?

1. (Secondary) What constitutes a normal team for a unique event or special operation?
2. (Secondary) How do you account for the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed during unique events and special operations?
3. (Secondary) What activities occur for monitoring, training, and developing team members to accomplish the unique event and special operation?

Transition into closing

### III. Closing

- A. **(Maintain Interactive Connection).** I appreciate your time and participation with this interview. At this moment, I would like to provide you an opportunity for questions concerning the project or myself. Are there any other statements you would like to contribute to the discussion?
- B. **(Summarize).** Once you again, I am a student at Liberty University pursuing my DBA, with a requirement of completing a research project. Your participation in this interview is an integral part of completing this requirement and fulfilling my dreams. For this, I am greatly appreciative; and unless you have any other questions or comments, this will end the interview.
- C. **(Required Actions).** I will transcribe the interview using the recording and will email you a copy for review within **two days**. If there is any misinterpretation of information, please contact me at so corrections can be made. Any time you feel as if you do not wish to continue with the process, let me know and I will delete any information collected.