

**Challenges That Clergy In Small Black Churches Face In The 21<sup>st</sup> Century During The  
Covid Pandemic**

by

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Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Education

School of Behavioral Sciences

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### **Abstract**

Leadership plays a critical role in any institution. Church leadership can guide the institution in the direction that it should go. In Small Black Churches (SBC), this research will identify the strategic leadership styles used in handling challenges. The intent is to identify the effectiveness of these styles in managing challenges in the 21<sup>st</sup> century church and their effect on personal leadership fulfillment. The study will interview pastors of local churches who had seminary training and those who did not. This author intends to record and transcribe the interviews for research purposes. By identifying the interviewees' leadership styles, the researcher hopes to lay a foundation for more available literature to fill the research gap as it relates to small churches. The Bible states: "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit" (John 15:2, New King James Version). Some leadership styles are more effective than others because of the Biblical and holistic approach that follows Biblical principles. In Pastoral Care and Counseling, the leadership's mission is to provide a haven for its people, leaders, and parishioners.

*Keywords:* Biblical principles, leadership, strategic style, quality of life, fulfillment, Small Black Churches (SBC)

### **Dedication**

I dedicate this dissertation to the men and women of God called to a labor of love. These are the leaders who were willing to endure the challenges of making tremendous sacrifices. With honor, each one has served the call of God in the spirit of excellence. Your examples will live on like an eternal torch.

## **Acknowledgments**

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I must express my deepest thanks and appreciation to the professors who have made this journey one that I will never forget. Your incredible input in our lives has created an eternal deposit. We will share that part of you with others. Thank you for being God's chosen servants. Many thanks to Dr. Fred Volk for stepping in and guiding me. You are a godsend. You helped add the last push that was needed to produce research that is invaluable to me. As my dissertation Chair, your character, patience, mentorship, encouragement, and genuine sincerity impacted my journey and changed my life. You are a tremendous blessing to all the students who take your classes. Thank you for using the right words to encourage and help us be the best that we can be. I am eternally grateful. Thank you, Dr. Wright, for your guidance, support, expertise, and sensitivity to the human experience, which helped solidify my research. I have received from the labor of your dedication to assisting students in succeeding, and with deep sincerity, I thank you.

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### **List of Abbreviations**

African American Church (AAC)

Authentic Leadership (AL)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

Colorectal Cancer (CRC)

Coronavirus Disease (COVID)

Leader-Member Exchange (LMX)

Leadership Practices Inventories (LPI)

New King James Version (NKJV)

People Quotient (PQ)

Performance Measurement System (PMS)

Perceived Organizational Support (POS)

Responsible Leaders (RL)

Spiritual Approaches to Work (SAW)

Small Black Churches (SBC)

Transactional Leadership (TL)

## **Chapter One: Introduction**

### **Overview**

In the free world, the church provides social support and relationships that strengthen and maintain successful communities (Freeks, 2018). The First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution makes provisions that allow churches the freedom to practice religion and provide humanitarian services to their members, the community, and the world at large. However, in providing services to others, the church has to maneuver through various challenges by strategically finding ways, networking with others, or developing programs to help and provide a successful outcome. The Church has the autonomy to practice its faith. A theocratic leadership governs the Church; members have the freedom to explore the relationship with their God within the boundaries of their faith. The First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States of America guarantees the Church's right to practice its religion without restraint by providing its members moral leadership to help them develop peaceful, caring, and loving homes for their families and communities. Also, church leadership has to set checks and balances that would help maintain its institution's integrity for centuries to come.

### **Background**

The 21<sup>st</sup> century confronts the church with two types of challenges: the external and the internal. External challenges come from public scrutiny and criticism that hold the church accountable for its leaders' behaviors. Since the latter half of the 20th-century, the church's actions have been under public scrutiny due to personal misconduct, misappropriation of funds, and lack of personal integrity (Cristian, 2020; Plante, 2020; Treadwell, 2020). The external challenge's negative report affects the church's evangelical operations and new members' dedication. Internal challenges come from the church's operational structure and religious

practices. Leadership must take an investigative look at the abuse issues and examine the internal factors that influence a leader's behavior. To understand the symptom, this researcher is looking at the source of abuse by leaders to discover the leadership factors (or lack thereof) that influenced their abusive behavior towards the congregants if any. For example, how do pastoral leaders describe the moral compass in their leadership style? How do these leaders recognize a deficit in moral values? What do they identify as the factors in their leadership style that produce a better quality of life, and how do they describe the outcomes?

Are there demands placed on leaders because of denominational liturgy and practice? Rabjerg and Stern (2018) state that Luther argued that conformity to the law did not gain salvation, nor did he acknowledge human beings' freedom that would have made this possible. They highlighted that Luther believed that other uses for the law, one of which was the first use (*usus civilis legis*), enabled sinners to live together in society and bring about order and justice in a fallen world. However, demands placed on the Church leaders were not biblically sound and thus added heavy burdens on leadership and actual moral teachings. Luther believed that our sinfulness takes the form of a fundamental self-concern (Rabjerg & Stern, 2018). The underlying concern means we are "curved in on ourselves" (*incurvatus in se*) as we turn inwards through the centripetal pressure of our self-absorption, and this is a factor that influences leadership and morals (Rabjerg & Stern, 2018). These authors point out that other researchers considered Luther to be too rigid in this area.

Over the past year, the world pandemic has caused more complex challenges. With the decreased attendance due to the COVID pandemic, churches have closed their doors to keep the community safe from spreading the virus (Hârlăoanu, 2020). The closing of the church's doors has also affected the finances of the church. And this affected the services that the church

provides to its members and the community. Also, Hârlăoanu points out the social and spiritual consequences of this virus' reach have had a detrimental effect on the parishioners and the church's financial support from its members. Monosky and Keeling (2021) added that business closures also strain those who have lost their jobs. This has had a significant effect on areas where indigenous residents are subject to the community's changes (Monosky & Keeling, 2021). Another problem emerges when day programs that assist those with intellectual or physical disability lose federal government funding because their schedules are misaligned because of the pandemic (Gould, 2020). During times of disasters, community agencies, including churches, responded to the people's needs. Still, because of the pandemic's affect upon the churches, their doors are closed to many of the services they used to offer (Palinkas et al., 2021). It is believed that due to the delay in promptly reporting the COVID-19 virus, many agencies, including churches, did not have time to strategize how they would be involved in helping the community (Balogun, 2020).

### **The Problem**

The changing world and the growth of the developing communities in the 21<sup>st</sup> century have increased urbanization that offers work and advancement opportunities and simultaneously develops harsh segregation mechanisms (Conrad, 2015). The systematic challenges within the communities seep into the church and create other challenges for church leadership. The issues surrounding church leadership have taken their toll and caused great scrutiny of the Church. Outside criticism is the external challenge that church leaders face. There have always been warning signs that called for better accountability (Bekkering, 2011). Televangelism in the 70s and the financial and sexual scandals of Jim Bakker and Jimmy Swaggart in the 80s were some warning signs. The question that arises is: How is leadership structured? In looking at the

historical effect a scandal has on the church's health, by examining the leadership's autonomy and hierarchal structure, Bottan and Perez-Truglia (2015) point out that because of the breakdown of godly morals, there was a fallout in church attendance and a decline in contributions because of inappropriate behavior and abuse scandals.

What leadership system is in place to circumvent sexual misconduct? Within some denominations, issues surrounded by sexual misconduct continue to be a challenge (Martinez, 2020). The public criticized the Church as an institution. Church leadership and others in authority received scrutiny because such behavior lacks knowing self-efficacy and self-awareness and the moral obligations to understand and develop these personal qualities (Caldwell & Hayes, 2016).

The media continued to highlight previously unreported sexual abuse by priests (Rashid & Barron, 2019). Carr (2013) believes that even when an individual repents, there is no guarantee that change will manifest. Professional psychological help through counseling is necessary for the abused and the abuser; therefore, when leadership keeps the crime within the institution's wall, they are doing a disservice to the victims and the public. Carr recognizes this as a critical issue. The Church should evaluate spiritual leaders' mental health to have better accountability within leadership (Chaney, 2013). Leaders communicate with their words, non-verbal actions, deeds, and sacrifices. Leadership should aspire to keep those they lead safe, happy, and at peace (Charteris-Black, 2007). The focus of church leadership should be to produce biblical discipleship (Chipumuro, 2014). Leaders must develop a biblical foundation or leadership accountability within its tenets to ward against violating Christian ethics. Leadership effectiveness must create and safeguard checks and balances that will keep better accountability at a maximum.

Rhodes (2020) points out a problem that arises when the church loses sight of the world around. The church must embrace the politics and the challenges and allow the light of its Biblical truth to help influence positive change for all within the community (Rhodes, 2020). Having a biblically sound theology helps bring the church and government leaders together to fight a common cause (Rhodes, 2020). Church leaders should also focus on becoming a community of ethics. An ethical community has a common foundation of God's word (Palmquist, 2020). The church provides a sociocultural input to the community to help elevate challenges by promoting health and wellness more than other agencies (Abbey & George, 2019). By interviewing community members, the church strategically comes up with ways that will directly help and benefit the community. The church is also aware of the distrust of Christianity due to its use of violence in the past which also lead to social injustice. When the church contains men and women of integrity, the community develops trust, which opens the door for discussion and listening (Abbey & George, 2019). The church also provides space for members to lead social programs such as weight loss, nutrition, and exercises classes.

Trotter (2020) maintains that an individual's physical and mental health must be sustained through each individual's autonomy and selfhood if there will be any long-term effect. The church provides programs that encourage individuals towards independence by teaching them how to control their own lives for those capable of doing so (Trotter, 2020). Zarzycka et al. (2020) point out various studies found links between religious/spiritual struggle and poorer well-being. However, only a few have examined how religious struggle affects mental well-being. Interestingly, the vast majority of empirical data suggest that religious/spiritual struggle is related to poor mental health (Zarzycka et al.). According to Terry and Cunningham (2020), when clergy does not focus on self-care, since clergy are an ignored and high-risk population, they

frequently neglect their well-being, often resulting in frequent stress, burnout, and other health-related impairments.

While the church affects the community through service, the church must also teach neighborly love to the community (Lysen & Martens, 2020). History shows a long theological reflection on the use of violence in Christianity; the command to love thy neighbor was not quickly embraced; therefore, the church must make reconciliation when reaching out to a diverse community (Lysen & Marten, 2020). Jesus' teaching is to replace violence with love – we are called to love our enemies (Matthew 5:44). Since racism is at the forefront in America's news, clergy are now having to deal with issues beyond the norm of community challenges (Rhodes, 2020). In addition, the church is faced with issues such as mental health, explaining the use of violence in the past, the challenge of social injustice, and a faith response to COVID-19. The Christian political theology drives the church leader, especially those from multi-racial churches, to confront all human struggle and injustice to restore humanity to a place of equal justice (Rhodes, 2020). In addition to the above issue, the church had to deal with a Faith Response to COVID-19 (Brewer et al., 2020). The Black church's response to the pandemic was adequate; however, dealing with the disparities from the country's response to the pandemic was difficult within the African American community and posed a challenge for the Black Churches because these communities were affected the most (Brewer et al., 2020).

Besides the challenges mentioned above, the literature review helped identify the literature gap that records the challenges that small Black churches face today. Since there is very little documentation outlining these churches' experiences, there is no empirical data showing studies on small Black churches' challenges. Little data shows what leadership style

pastors in small Black churches practice. This research is an attempt to gather data from pastors of local Black churches across America.

The researcher seeks to identify unique or similar challenges that these leaders experience to open the door for future research. In the challenge of domestic violence, David and Johnson (2020) interviewed thirteen Black pastors. Of the 13 pastors who were a part of the research study, all reported that they had requested professional counseling because of domestic violence experienced by a spouse (Davis & Johnson, 2020). Zust et al. (2021) point out that every three seconds, someone in the United States is physically assaulted by an intimate partner, according to (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 2015). These authors mention that the pastors' role in counseling victims of domestic violence is one of the most understudied aspects of domestic violence literature. There was very little data that supplied information on how many individuals were counseled for domestic violence and how influential the local pastors were in counseling, or whether they referred their congregants to professional pastoral counselors (Zust et al., 2021).

Another challenge that small Black churches face is not having leaders with counseling training. There is a need to address significant issues, such as domestic violence (du Plessis & Nkambule, 2020). Another problem of these small churches is how they deal with abuse of authority by leadership and their neglect of practicing sound Biblical doctrine in the church and home (du Plessis & Nkambule, 2020). These pastors need counseling training. In interviewing congregants, it was discovered that they preferred to receive counseling from their pastors if they were ever in violent situations (Zust et al., 2021). These members had a trusting relationship with their pastors and felt that it gave them a safe environment, to be honest.

A challenge prevalent in some Black churches is how to develop a healthy lifestyle. Bentley-Edwards et al. (2019) recognized that although spiritual and moral righteousness is a central facet of religion, physical health is also vital in the church. Because of some churches' practices, obesity seems to be an issue among some parishioners (Edwards et al., 2019). In mental health, research result shows that out of (n=736) (78.6% n = 570) reported using prayer or some other spiritual practice (Taylor et al., 2020). "Roughly 9 out of 10 of both African Americans and Black Caribbeans indicated that 1) prayer is essential when coping with stress and 2) "strongly agree" that they look to God for strength, support, and guidance" (Taylor et al., 2020, p. 74). The data support that those who believe in God and practice a life of prayer and faith have shown greater signs of coping. Another study by Tuffour (2020) points out Pentecostalism's moral and spiritual dogmas could confuse and present dilemmas and paradoxes for clinicians because their priority and belief are to science. Nonetheless, the study associates prayer for healing on the spiritual side, which connects to the act of repentance followed by sanctification and justification as part of the moral and spiritual process.

In developing a healthy lifestyle, it is essential to look at self-care among leadership. When ministers become overextended, this affects their stress level and leads to burnout. Leaders must incorporate self-care, which is the active process of recovering, maintaining, and improving one's health (Samushonga, 2020). There are disparities in the quality of life and what African Americans believe. Some believe that African Americans take a different stance on healthcare than White Americans. However, the difference stems from communication disparities in healthcare providers and in mistrust of the system, which differentiates how they provide care to African Americans compared to White Americans (McDonnell & Idler, 2020). It was also noted that there is a proven history of inequitable and sometimes unethical care and other barriers to

quality care. McDonnell and Idler (2020) point out the African American/ Black Church was born out of slavery and has continued to be one of the most consistent, independent, and stable institutions in African American communities for over 400 years. Many of its leaders take a stance in representing the historical belief of standing against social injustice, discrimination, and racism while improving the lives of its people (McDonnell & Idler, 2020). This research will also look at leaders taking on the fight to help the black community, their experiences, and how the fight has affected their quality of life.

### **Purpose Statement**

This researcher proposes that the Leadership style that has better ethical accountability built into it leads to a better quality of life. Leaders who experience greater job fulfillment and satisfaction will have a much better quality of life. This qualitative phenomenological study aims to understand the different leadership styles and examine how small Black churches use their style to deal with the challenges they face in the 21st-century. Library searches did not produce specific results for small Black churches leadership or challenges within the United States. Therefore, examining the various leadership styles helps to provide a reference point to identify the styles that the small Black churches use when dealing with the challenges that they experience.

### **Significance of the Study**

Leadership is both an exploratory and a practical skill encompassing an individual or organization's ability to lead or guide an individual, group, organization, church, or state (Jibiliza, 2020). Although leaders' challenges have spread internationally, questions remain for the local community churches: How can leaders effectively address the problems? This research will examine leadership styles to assess whether the differences in outcomes lead to a better

quality of life. What are the essential steps that leaders must take to help the church develop better checks and balances to create a safe and productive community for congregants and leadership? Jesus presented himself as a credible leader by justifying His words by His actions (Addo & Dube, 2020). Leadership today is challenged to demonstrate the same character as Jesus. Ortiz-Gómez et al. (2020) observed that spirituality plays a mediating role in the relationship between servant leadership and work engagement. Individuals who practice their faith have a better dedication to their work (Ortiz-Gómez et al., 2020).

On the other hand, church closings add financial challenges to the pastoral leadership and leave the community in a deficit of many services (Moore, 2020). However, Romans 13 instructs that we must respect all powers because the Higher power has ordained all powers. With COVID-19, the church should respect the governor's mandate to limit the number of attendees, wear masks and wash hands. The more severe challenge arrives when the church closes its doors and leaves the community.

### **Research Question**

This research project will focus on leadership styles' phenomenology when dealing with leadership conflict and ministry challenges. The research questions should give insight into the challenges that church leaders experience in the 21st century. The focus will also look at the relationship between exposure and outcome (Lane, 2018). How do pastoral leaders in small Black congregations describe their experience navigating conflict within their congregation? How do leaders in the African American church experience the effect and impact that leadership style and job satisfaction have on their families?

### **Additional Research Questions**

The additional research questions help by providing insight into the effects of challenges on each leader's quality of life.

RQ1: What is the meaning of emotional and mental health for a church leader?

RQ2: How do ministerial challenges affect the quality of family life?

RQ3: What personal experiences affect an individual's leadership style choice?

### **Summary**

This chapter provides an overview of the study, which describes the pastors' experiences in the various challenges they faced in the 21st century. In the mission to fully participate in the mission of Christ, pastors are reminded that Christ and His message are one (Obiorah, 2020). Furthermore, ministry brings with it a level of sacrifice that each must be willing to undergo. These pastors experienced challenges within the church community that they serve unknown to many they serve. However, there are minimal documents in academia that give data on the experience of the challenges that pastors in small Black churches deal with and the effects of these challenges on them.

This research provides a platform so these pastors would have the opportunity to share their experiences, whether the result negatively or positively affected them, their families, and their congregations. Phenomenology is a commitment to the descriptions of experiences and not explanations or analyses (Moustakas, 1994). The study aims to offer these pastors the opportunity to be free to describe their experiences in the phenomenon that occurred to them.

## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

### **Overview**

In many churches today, conflicts often occur between senior leaders and subordinates (Afolabi, 2019). Power struggles can emerge from personality differences, but in many cases, they develop indirectly from a denomination's structure (Matshobane & Masango, 2018). The result is that many leaders are confronted with a new challenge, lacking prior experience or training in dealing with peer conflicts (Appiah-Kubi, 2020). The psychological and emotional stress from these conflicts with colleagues affects decision-making, which often leads to people leaving the ministry (Joynt, 2017; Geisler et al., 2019). Breen (2008) observes that disagreements over leadership style are among the biggest causes of disputes between denominational church leaders. These authors point out that there is an undercurrent of professional friction (DeJuliis & Flinko, 2016) when leadership styles differ. Bitter conflict arises (Miller, 2019) when leaders with the same or more educational training do not submit to the senior pastor's leadership. Authoritarianism and church politics (Castle, 2017) are two other areas of conflict with their unique challenges. These conflicts can lead to division in the church where either the church dissolves or one pastor leaves and starts a second church (Breen, 2008). Most times, a leader's personal vices and pride (Setran, 2016) are prioritized over a church's survival. Some successful leaders work both in and out of the church environment.

### **Theoretical Framework**

One must consider principles when looking at leadership styles and their practical and transformational ability. Abraham (2018) notes that individuals who go into the ministry when they have not resolved past injuries, struggles, and failures will struggle to be effective. Moreover, when leaders do not process and understand how the past has affected them, their

actions become influenced by unresolved conflicts. These conflicts may bring insecurities that shape the outcome of one's leadership. People with issues latch onto similar leaders (Abraham, 2018). The relationship between believers and God has proven to have many psychological benefits; however, when individuals attach themselves to someone else's hurt and pain, it goes beyond empathy and leads to psychopathological behavior (Hiebler-Ragger et al., 2016). In some unfortunate cases, people who still have open emotional wounds identify with others whose wounds are also opened. Further complications ensue. Abraham (2018) believes that leaders surround themselves with sycophants. These individuals are submissive to their leaders' wishes. These leaders can then continue to lead toward individual successes (Sowcik & Council, 2018). However, this leadership cannot produce a victorious spiritual church.

### **Leadership Theories**

Many authors pointed out that researchers' focus was on leadership styles as they examined the struggles and challenges that small Black churches faced. However, Rowold et al. (2015) pointed out that researchers had conducted theoretical and empirical leadership research efforts to gain further insight into these struggles and challenges. But, there is still much debate about what leadership style produced the best outcome for these institutions. These authors highlighted that what was missing from leadership literature was a critical "compare and contrast" approach to the dominant leadership theories and the empirical data that showed results. These researchers also pointed out that it was crucial to look at leadership theories and their respective constructs to identify contextualization and implementation in the areas that affected followers' outcomes. Their research noted that another significant issue in leadership research was the lack of agreement about which categories of behavior were meaningful for leaders (Rowold et al., 2015).

Another author believed that to lead, or provide leadership, one must do something (Theletsane, 2015). He pointed out that one of the primary purposes of leadership was to produce extraordinary success where they created teams capable of heroic behavior that improved themselves, their communities, and the world around them. Other authors recognized that any leadership's common factor, regardless of the institution, church, university, or business, was the people (Alonderiene & Majauskaite, 2016). Leaders need people. Without the support of people who believed in and embraced the institution's vision, leaders could not be as effective as they could be. Leadership still affects people, and people dedicate their lives to doing the things they love doing. Researchers reported that when leadership does not produce job satisfaction, people move on to somewhere they feel more fulfilled. Alonderiene and Majauskaite (2016) stated that the institution's performance reflected leadership success. Furthermore, when employees were unsatisfied with what they did, it reflected on a leader's effectiveness. The administration showed its effectiveness by investing in its employees' and volunteers' job satisfaction.

### **Leadership Styles**

Pieterse et al. (2010) point out that in their research, transformational leadership is a style of leadership that influences followers to rise above their self-interest. Followers do this by altering their morale, ideals, interests, and values, motivating them to perform better than usual. These authors contrasted this type of leadership with transactional leadership (TL), which focuses on an exchange relationship in which the leader defines the followers. Other researchers investigated the process by which transformational-leadership styles affect the individuals' managerial performance through the use of a comprehensive performance measurement system (PMS) and reward system (Nguyen et al., 2017). These authors' research focused on the cause and effect of transformational leaders and tried to identify the system that affects workers'

performance through a reward system. On the other hand, Pieterse et al. (2010) looked at how expressive leadership style affects and encourages followers to question the status quo. The last component of individualized consideration entails providing support for followers' individual development needs. These authors Nguyen et al. (2017) examine the positive influence and encouragement that this leadership style focused on by supporting individuals by working on the system to help provide for their needs. Although considerable theoretical and empirical leadership research efforts exist, there is still much debate about leadership.

Researchers noticed that charismatic leadership affects institutional success by looking at the effectiveness in the 21st century. Charismatic leadership affects organizational identity (Bastedo et al., 2014). These leaders are more influential amongst the people that they serve. Universities and other institutions are looking for direction that will be influential and successful. These authors looked at Rudolph Sohm, who believed charismatic leadership results from divine inspiration. With this in mind, one can understand that when leadership genuinely functions under divine inspiration, there will be a higher level of success. These authors also point out that this kind of leadership will not work for all institutions. Charismatic leadership works for universities, churches, and institutions that provide social services; however, this leadership style in the for-profit institution's leadership will not be as successful.

Other authors examined Transformational, Transactional leadership, and Laissez-faire (Borgmann et al., 2016). The study looked at three areas: relations, task, and change. The study examined individual effectiveness in the above three areas in each leadership style. Within each leadership style, it is essential to identify the essential goals, to find similarities and differences to determine their effectiveness. This study's findings concluded that each method has relevance and efficiency that will help promote relations, tasks, and change in those it leads.

Researchers concluded that Transformational and Transactional leadership have the structure to promote a regulatory focus on unethical behavior within the organization (Graham et al., 2015). The authors found that leadership style gave structure to leadership; however, personality affected the delivery. The leadership style exemplified the intent and heart of his or her delivery. How a leader presented a problem created the right attitude in the followers to either receive a solution or lose confidence. The authors also noted that while Transactional leadership was a leadership style, Transformational leadership included Transactional leadership within its structure. The authors believed in two hypotheses: (1) the transactional – the delivery of the leader affected the people for good or bad; (2) the transformational – we see the people's response when their actions promoted regulatory focus that discouraged unethical behavior.

In comparison, Brandt and Edinger (2015) examined Transformational leadership in teams to determine how effective it was and whether gender automatically determined greater success. This style of leadership gave people the autonomy to be creative as they accomplished their goals. Transformational leadership also focused on inspiring others to be their best selves. This leadership also motivated people to work in teams. The authors surmised that women were more effective than men in this leadership style; however, they also stated that overall, extroverts were more successful than introverts. So, transformational leaders who were extroverts were more successful than introverts.

In examining leadership styles and their effectiveness in today's ministry, it is crucial to note that leadership must also focus on the leader as a human individual. In her exploratory study and investigation of strategic leadership, Grandy (2013) explored applying for-profit principles in the not-for-profit Church. The author also pointed out that there was limited research that examined how leadership initially applied traditional theories to for-profit and public sector

organizations or non-profit organizations. The study extended strategic leadership from the for-profit to charitable organizations in the church setting. The author pointed out that while charismatic leaders drew upon transformational leadership, servant leadership perspective was at the foundation of their institution. However, Grandy believed that servant leadership's moral and ethical undertones aligned with church beliefs. The system could form a hierarchy where the leaders were always right. However, there was a relationship between the stockholder and the institution within the for-profit institution. The institution's success demonstrated a multi-dimensional facet, including the morale of the workers. In applying these for-profit principles to the not-for-profit church institution, the paradigm shifted to include the followers as a part of its success.

In looking at the Church in the 21st century, one has to examine the congregation's size. One researcher who focused on the megachurches recognized that the larger the group, the more leadership had to pay attention to meeting the needs of the people they served. The Church has to adapt to the needs of the people, which has a significant effect on leadership and style. Bratton (2012) believed that to meet the needs of over 4,000 people; there must be a certain amount of green space. People responded to an environment that made them feel comfortable. He also pointed out that leadership provided aesthetics that influenced calm and peace. This author believed that larger congregations came to other areas that leadership needed to focus on and provide. The more people there were, the more the fellowship space and surroundings needed to accommodate them. When the church members were in the thousands, leadership had to manage the Church as a business and treat the people as clients (Bratton, 2012). The author compared the concept of a shopping mall to that of the Church. Space and beautiful landscaping became essential, based on the congregation's size. When leadership ignored the ministry's logistical

aspects, this invited chaos during extensive services or events. Bratton identified that esthetics helped manage behavior by creating an environment that allowed people to feel welcomed and relaxed.

Within leadership, conflict can hurt the success of the ministry. Breen (2008) points out that within denominational churches, conflict over leadership styles is one of the biggest causes of discord between leaders and can have a direct effect on the effectiveness and outcome of ministry success. This study points out that there is an undercurrent of professional jealousy most times. Some leaders who have the same or more educational training may not submit to the leadership of the pastor leading the Church. For churches to succeed in ministry and meet the people's needs by being a spiritual authority figure, leaders aligned themselves with the vision and purpose of the ministry. Issues such as authoritarianism and church politics are two other conflicting areas the author mentioned that affect the success of the Church in the 21st century. This conflict can lead to a split in which one pastor leaves and starts a second church or the Church dissolves. In these cases, personal pride has won over the priority of the Church's survival. The vision of the Church as a community must be the priority of all leaders.

Leadership must recognize the local Church as a part of the universal Church. Burdick (2018) examines church leadership from not only a domestic perspective but through its global influence. This author notes that technology and social media are two areas that influence the modern Church. Burdick points out that the Church is losing members to two main factors: (1) generational replacement and (2) the older generation's death.

Another area in which leadership needs to focus is immigrants. Statistics show that with many immigrants entering the US, leaders need to contextualize their leadership to be more creative and adaptive to these unique cultures and lifestyles. Immigrants either join churches they

feel comfortable with or get together and form their congregations (Burdick, 2018). American church leaders allow learning and growing from other cultures and races. The question posed is: Are they willing to recognize God in other races and cultures? Church leaders have to be ready to embrace all people and their distinct styles of worship.

In looking at effective leadership, one has to look at the Church's direction compared to the secular industry. Researchers focused on Transformational Leadership (TL) and how it has affected workers' performance in Korea (Choi et al., 2016). These authors explore the workers' response to TL, their view of the support they received, and how they perceived organizational support (POS). The researchers concluded that the more the workers recognized POS, the more effective they became in their job performance. When workers felt that leaders were working with and encouraging them to do their best, it increased the workers' morale and resulted in higher productivity. This research supports that TL is useful because it brings workers and leaders together as a team and provides a higher level of fulfillment and accountability to the group as a collective.

When looking at different denominations and their effectiveness, one has to consider the location and socioeconomic status of the members. In his research, Clark (2013) looked at the difference in Pentecostalism because of geographic location. This author looked at North America, South Africa, and North Great Britain and examined the same denomination differences. The author attributed the differences to culture, socioeconomic status, and political freedom to practice religion. An impressive result of his discovery was that the North, which makes up only 10% of the Pentecostals, globally produces about 90% of Pentecostalism research (Clark, 2013). The author points out that the North and the South, each with different political experiences, have two unique world views. One effect is that the expertise of the leaders is

diverse in the regions sought. The author also points out that contextualization, the need to focus on the region, is true in Pentecostalism (Clark, 2013). Each area offers unique styles of leadership because each group's experience differs from the other.

It is also crucial to examine the leader as a human being and ask how behavior and personhood can affect ministry effectiveness. Cregård (2017) examines the “risk” of Spiritual Leadership. The author looked at three areas within Spiritual Leadership: the mind, the heart, the spirit. The heart comprises emotions and feelings. The author looked at what Spiritual Leadership offered. Spiritual leadership does not have to be religious (Cregård, 2017). This leadership style focuses on the complete individual holistically, and it concerns the whole individual to make provisions that help its success rate. This author examined how this leadership style affected nuns. Nuns have taken a vow of obedience and poverty. The author looked at their lives and their relationship to the abbess. Because they dedicate their spiritual lifestyle to Christ, the author concluded that there should be a rotation so there would be room for the nuns to have higher levels of success as they continue to serve the Lord in their obedience. Rotation in leadership allows workers a clean slate, improving their quality of work (Cregård, 2017). When command creates an environment that helps people flourish and be effective in their roles within the institution, their leadership style is holistic and inclusive.

Over the years, many researchers looked into church leadership effectiveness to see how stress affected its leaders. Researchers have stated that clergymen suffered from chronic disease rates higher than those of non-clergy leaders (Cutts et al., 2012). In looking at the clergy's quality of life, these authors examined the retreat's implementation to negate that clergy experienced chronic health. The authors looked at a holistic program that met the need for spirit, soul, and

body. The leader's spiritual life is holistic and needed to focus on physical health if the clergy wanted a better quality of life.

In looking at the effectiveness of leaders in and outside the Church, it was essential to look at what leadership styles were practiced. Another form of leadership is authentic leadership (AL). It is characterized by high self-awareness levels, a more focused balance in decision making, and greater transparency in communication (Edú-Valsania et al., 2016). AL focuses on being authentic with those it leads. These authors used a correlational study with a sample of 562 workers. This research revealed that the more genuine leadership was in sharing information, the more the workers showed the same behavior and willingness to share knowledge with those who needed it. The findings also showed the more aware, balanced, ethical, and transparent the leaders were, the easier it was to stimulate the employees to productive knowledge sharing behavior. AL will be useful in the 21st Century church by allowing the members to have a greater awareness and knowledge of the Church as an institution.

Kessler and Kretzschmar (2015) focused their research on Christian leadership as a trans-disciplinary field of study. These authors brought to the table the critical discussion that Christian leadership is both theological and non-theological. It is essential for 21<sup>st</sup> century leadership. Church leadership uses two disciplines structured to help bring genuine change. The authors pointed out that Christian leadership was leadership within a Christian or secular organization. Christian leadership focused on sub-disciplines like Practical Theology, Theological Ethics, or Missiology. Christian leadership's focus related primarily to church ministry; however, Christian leadership has Christian ethics as its foundation since many Christians are now in positions outside the church ministry. The Christian leadership model owed its structure to management science. Kessler & Kretzschmar (2015) highlighted that

Christian leadership's theological training and business management style allowed it to run the Church as a valid business.

Within this leadership, there is also Practical Theology, a discipline that also incorporates different sub-disciplines. Liturgics, homiletics, poimenics, religious education, and iconology are all under church leadership management. The authors Kessler and Kretzschmar (2015) also pointed out that Practical Theology owes its beginning to academics. In mentioning this, the authors strengthen their position that there are many sub-disciplines within Christian leadership. The article further points out that leadership can also experience burnout when practicing Practical Theology, a phenomenon which also needs further exploration. The data shows that church ministries and leaders show an over-average risk of burnout. Because Christian leadership is transdisciplinary, the focus must be on total care, which includes the leader.

Continuing the subject of leadership for the 21<sup>st</sup> century Church, Long (2017) explains that leadership, as seen in film studies, gives us another view of different leadership styles. The greater understanding brings leaders, their followers, and their shared relationship into full view through asymmetrical leadership. The film brings to life true stories of leadership. Therefore, the film student recognizes the emotions and passion that make the Leadership style attractive. These films bring to life the struggles of injustice, hardship, poverty, justice, survival, and even a savior. The true to life characterization is believable. Learning about leadership in this format allows the student to see how the knowledge we have about leadership is narrow and tainted by the prevailing discourses that emerged in different places and times. The author believes that film narratives align with the three predominant discourses in Organizational Leadership: the controller, the therapist, and the messiah (Long, 2017). For example, "Lean on Me," based on a true story, brought to life the story of a principal who bullied and alienated his staff. However,

his style of leadership was effective when he provoked his team to fight for their school. This leadership style helps the student see that in times of crisis, theoretical leadership styles evolve and rise to the place where they cause change and survival. It also allows the student to experience the joy when leadership is successful in changing lives. Long achieved his goal by bringing to the student an article that demonstrated leadership holistically. The visual aspects of the film delivered another view of academic learning. It showed the film's construct, which allows us to "talk about leadership as if it were a naturally occurring phenomenon".

Ethical leadership is the focus of their article on leadership. Mabey et al., (2017) focus their article on ethical leadership by following the Jesus model. They mention a growing trend in spiritual approaches to work (SAW) and spiritual leadership theory (SLT). They also point out that there is a dark side to SAW. Since SAW and Transformational leaders can manipulate people through the religious belief system, the authors also point out that for leaders to be ethical, they must deal with their egos. They also point out the evidence suggesting a relationship between attraction to power and reduced empathy, compassion, and concern for others. Leaders must learn how to inhibit their selfish desires and habits, actions that indicate whether a leader is ethical. SAW brings a level of trust that needs ethical leadership, thus establishing the boundaries that protect employees from leadership manipulation.

Throughout history, individuals in leadership positions have changed the world in significant ways (Malott, 2016). Malott believes that studying leadership can teach us the science of behavior. External observation recognizes this behavior. However, Malott examined four principles he found most in the biographies of the individuals who interest him: (1) commitment to principle, (2) independence, (3) resilience, and (4) consistency. These four characteristics tell about the drive of each leader. Commitment to the principle keeps the force of going forward and

determining to find a way at whatever the cost. The author highlighted that Nelson Mandela had to renounce his cause if he wanted freedom. He refused the offer because he was eager and committed to pursuing an equal opportunity for all South Africans. The author saw Mandela's commitment to principle, his independence, his resilience, and his consistency. Mother Teresa showed resilience in her cause as she dedicated her life to helping even the untouchables. The author sought to find a driving force that led these individuals to do whatever possible to help their cause make a difference, and he explained this is a cultural phenomenon. The question Malott then asks is: "how do leaders affect cultural phenomena?" He found there are leaders responsible for affecting cultural phenomenon. The drive behind these leaders comes from the four characteristics stated above.

Times of economic disruption (whether globally, nationally, regionally, or locally) impact leadership (Matarazzo, & Pearlstein, 2016). These authors highlight it not mattering what incidents occur and cause change. It would take someone who envisions something different for the community and the institution's future to do whatever they could to maintain what they have until the finances come to support and provide stability. This challenge begins with a need to organize by doing things like fundraising and soliciting one's politicians to assist in whatever area they can (Matarazzo & Pearlstein, 2016). In Sidebar 6, a young lady helped her community, which made the difference as she showed empathy and commitment.

Young and Firmin (2014) focused on the importance of relational connection in Pastoral ministry/leadership. Pastors find themselves always on the side of the desk that gives the advice. However, pastors need to have the support that will help them regain balance within the ministry. The pastor's role is to be there for the congregation; however, that role can deplete a leader, especially in large churches. Pastoral leadership needs to connect with others who will encourage

them in their ministry. They need relationships that will motivate them towards pro-social action. Having other pastors to fellowship with, these leaders need a platform to continue to grow as individuals. Pastors need a place where they can exhale and enjoy their relationship with God. In developing relationships with pastors and other leaders, pastors can form a bond that is recreational and non-work related. Within leadership, leaders need to establish or nurture the relationships which help them grow. It is by having these relationships and establishing lifelong connections that these leaders improve their quality of life.

Walton (2011), examined megachurches in African American communities, and gave a historical overview of the development of these churches from the early 1900s until now. There was a need for worship when millions of African Americans migrated from the south to the north. In response to this crisis, leaders opened their doors and allowed churchgoers to find a place of fellowship. Megachurches, another phenomenon, have escalated over the last five decades. This article looks briefly at the ethical challenge that these churches face from critics. These critics believe the structure of these churches is an issue for the discipleship of all. The author argues that professional identity, mass culture compatibility, and theological creativity represent creative fusion and internal tensions that pose ethical challenges to their congregational missions. Within many of these ministries, there is no definitive meaning of the Leadership style.

### **Leadership Quality of Life**

The foundation of our Christianity began with "the redemptive work of Christ." This famous evangelical catchphrase highlights the logic of redemption in Christian soteriology that salvation is free, but God paid a high price by sending His son to die for the sins of the whole world (Elijah, 2008). Also, Christians are responsible for the freedom of salvation. The

Christians/leaders' goal is to set the example by living a life that exemplifies the life of a follower of Christ. The Bible instructs us to be at peace, and in whatever state we are in, we should always give God thanks (Philippians 4:11). There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death. (Proverbs 14:12, King James Version).

The priority of accountability within leadership must have a biblical foundation. The Bible's infallible Word is the structural foundation that holds leaders responsible for their actions. One author believes that if missions, visions, and goals are developed and governed solely by organization elites, their perspectives become prioritized and legitimized at the organization level (Coule, 2015). However, Birzu (2019) points out that God's Logos has primacy in the Church and creation through His light. And by remaining accountable to God's word, the Church becomes victorious and overcomes the world's challenges because of trust, acknowledgment, and faith in God's word.

Leadership is an infrastructure established for the institution. Leadership sets the example for others to follow (1 Corinthians 11:1). The Bible sets the groundwork for every leader to follow. Everything that leadership does should have the Bible as its foundation. Many Christians who are in leadership roles wonder what secular leadership theory is in the practice of Christian leadership (Baumgartner, 2011). The issue always arises when leadership pushes the spirit aside and implements secular philosophy. Eventually, leadership theory cannot lay a foundation to help followers live by example.

Church leadership is primarily responsible to provide spiritual, moral, and life skills to its members. By examining the history of the church and the people that the church services, empirical evidence can give us data describing our effectiveness and shortcomings. Robust accountability must be in place when providing care to congregations who put their trust in

leadership. According to Blanchard et al., (2014) a community needs one Church per 1,000 residents for the congregation's proper ecology. When there is one Church representing 1,000 community residents, there is a positive response to members' participation in voluntary services and attendance. At the community level, an increase in the number of churches per 1,000 persons is significantly associated with a higher score on the composite religious participation measure ( $b = 0.083$ ;  $P < 0.001$ ) (Blanchard et al.). When a church represents every 1,000 residents, it positively affects the ecology of the community. Neighborhoods are more communal and provide a safe, pleasant place for families to raise children.

There are other leadership styles that can also be applied to church leadership. Boundary management style looks at the characteristic of work-non-work boundary management (Kossek et al., 2012). The concept touches on the practical function of a manager and explores what is real. There is a daily transition from work to non-work (home or family life). There is also the movement from non-work (home) back to work. The boundaries that manage these two have within them practical ethics built on distinguishing the two and giving each area its rightful place. When the two intermarry, there is a disruption in the boundaries, and it eventually becomes difficult having two separate limits. These authors believe that there are three areas within these boundaries where management must take place. The first is cross-role interruption behaviors (work to non-work and non-work to work interruptions). Border deals with the degree to which individuals allow breaks from one role to another. The second is the identity centrality of work and family roles. Management is useful when there is respect between the boundaries between family and work. Furthermore, the third is the perceived control of boundaries.

There must be a way to identify boundary crossings (Kossek et al., 2012). When these boundaries cross, it can interrupt work or non-work. These authors use a person-centered

approach to examine the effects of setting boundaries. This leadership style helps us see that having this must exist for leaders and followers.

Considering the critical role that church leadership plays in community lives, we must find better ways to care for leaders and protect the community from disappointment and devastation. Accountability on various levels, starts with the financial. Researchers have explained that having a 2x2 system and having individuals sign off on all transactions within the Church's financial operations helps maintain accountability (Hoos & Bollmann, 2012). For financial responsibility, the safer practice is for the Board to appoint teams rather than appointing leadership.

The responsibilities of leadership can overwhelm, resulting in leaders believing they have entitlement because of how much they have given of themselves. The question that leaders must answer is: Who receives the glory? (Livesay, 2011). The lack of humility is one of the greatest dangers to leadership. Leadership sometimes struggles with seduction in the arena of finances. Being in a position of power puts each individual in a vulnerable place and opens the door for humanity's exaltation over the divine. Leadership must glorify God before the people. An exceptional example of leadership not glorifying God before the people was what Moses did before God's people in the wilderness (Num. 20:10-11).

One researcher recommends that yearly retreats focused on teamwork training makes a difference (Hartwig, 2016). Teamwork training opens the door for higher levels of transparency. This training focuses on all areas of leadership: from spiritual to financial to ministry. Team building allows the leadership team to discuss all areas of concern in a judgment-free environment with an independent mediator. This environment will enable individuals to voice

concerns and disappointments, thus using this as a platform to build better foundations to move forward.

With the development of greater familiarity between team members, leadership can develop trust between members. A relationship of trust opens the door for feedback. Team members may ask questions that move feedback through the leadership chain. Because low-ranking members of the leadership team are free to provide input, leadership creates a higher self-awareness level. This greater awareness of what might be lacking also offers the chance for improvement. When various sources provide upward feedback, the social context in which feedback is provided and received helps leadership focus on the team's greater good and removes the focus from self (Rutkowski & Steelman, 2005). This process allows leaders to work towards improvements through self-development to aid in leadership effectiveness.

Self-development and honesty are necessary to help individuals develop into leaders who have character and consider other's needs before their own. Lack of proper leadership action opens the door for change to happen. Most of the recommendations dealt with an intellectual, behavioral position and not from a sin position. Sin should lead to remorse and repentance. The author points out that leadership usually dispenses it in an all-encompassing manner whenever one applies Christian ethics. Christianity is the largest religion globally; one-third of the world's population of over 2.5 billion people (Kim & Kim, 2016). The diversity demonstrated is in cultural, racial, socioeconomic, religious, and philosophical alterity (Slater, 2018).

### **Leadership Style Challenges**

Since leaders have to deal with the differences in the people they lead, Multicultural leadership puts an added strain on the leader that differs from most leadership. Role strain theory describes the challenges placed on the leaders who deal with a multicultural congregation.

Within this theory, the leader has to focus on three primary areas. The first is the congregation as a micro-level structure; the second is the religious denomination or tradition (meso-level structure); and the third is the US racialized social system (macro-level) social structure (Edwards, 2014). The leader has to focus on all three areas within the diverse cultural structure of the congregation. However, role strain occurs at two levels when the leader cannot accomplish all that is expected of him. The first thing examined is the leader's performance in his responsibilities and what he can do. The second level examined is psychological. This emerges when difficulty is experienced in fulfilling one's obligations (Edwards). As a multicultural church leader in the 21st century, one must know these strains and their effect on leadership performance.

As leaders continue to open their doors to all believers, they also experience cultural differences. Effa (2013) examines diversity in culture as he explored Nigerians' migration to the United States. The author points out that nineteen million Nigerians are Anglicans, which amounts to about 25% of Anglicans worldwide. He also points out that over 800,000 Nigerians live in the city of Houston. These immigrants are seeking to improve their education and economic opportunities. A better way of life is also the same goal as other immigrants from other cultures in other parts of the world. However, as Anglican Christians, these immigrants often join churches in their communities. The socio-cultural and educational goals of members have become a priority for many leaders in these areas. Church leaders must know the goals and missions of their members to help them achieve their goals. Some leaders must seek education on how to meet the needs of a culturally diverse congregation. These immigrants are also missionary focused; however, many are disappointed in the mediocrity they find in the Christian

life they encounter in the Western world (Effa, 2013). Leaders faced the challenge of encouraging these Christians to stay focused on their missionary goals.

### **Challenge of Leadership Endurance**

The leaders of the Church in the 21st century will continue to experience an array of challenges as the world continues to experience the last days' effect. The Bible states: "But know this, that in the last days [a] perilous times will come" (2 Timothy 3:1, NKJV). In any profession, there is a level of emotional and mental stress. Elkington (2013) states many pastors encounter adversity. The author noted that in the 21st century, many pastors are leaving their leadership roles. Migration is attributed to the difficulty they face in ministry, which leads them to despair and to leaving the ministry. The author points out there are six shifts the leaders need to make. The first shift is from a Christendom model to a missionary model of church life. The other five include a change from high intensity to a balanced life. These are a shift to resiliency training in ministry preparation; a shift to a better system of care developed by practice; a shift to a renewed perspective on the value of adversity in shaping pastors for more in-depth, more productive ministry outcomes, and a shift to congregational education concerning the high cost of pastoral attrition. Elkington lists these as necessary focuses the pastor must add to the ministry structure if he/she plans to handle adversity and survive it.

For leaders' effectiveness in ministry, the minister finds grounds by having a stable and intimate relationship with God. Authors believe that there are links between an intimate relationship with God and mental health (Ellison et al., 2012). These authors researched with 906 participants in a national panel survey among representative samples of two populations affiliated with a local church. They surveyed the active elders and members and found that those devoted to God could better handle and recover from the anxiety than those who had little to no

attachment to God when faced with anxiety and stress. These authors demonstrate in their research that devotion to God helps to manage psychological distress when the dependency on God is real in the individual's life.

Geh (2014) explained that leadership must learn to re-establish themselves for the purpose that God has called them. This author focused on an experiential learning model for leadership. He believes that leadership is at a critical starting point because it plays an increasingly important role in creating models of influence within the institution they lead. The impact not only teaches other leaders, but it also shows those who rely on their leadership. When the experiential learning model incorporated into the organizational, spiritual guidance, the author found it provides a contextualization that gives others a tangible concept to examine. In the experiential learning model, a feeling is at the foundation. The model presents both the "made" and "found" organizational worlds. The author points out that the dichotomy embodied in the metaphors "made" and "found" demonstrates profound implications for understanding sustainable organizational learning in organizational spirituality (Geh, 2014). He also points out that the ability to feel for inspiration is a necessary antecedent to sustainable organizational learning. This leadership model focuses on helping the feeling, representing the spiritual, and uses it as the foundation in the "made" and "found" world.

"A Systematic Literature Review of Responsible Leadership Challenges, Outcomes, and Practices" describes the challenges that Responsible Leaders (RL) experience (Greige et al., 2017). However, RL faces a variety of problems. This leadership style has a holistic approach to leadership. The challenges they face hinder their ability to perform their duties as leaders. When balancing the needs of different stakeholders, it may force the leader to compromise. Besides, they have to build and sustain the commitment of the followers within a church. As a responsible

leader, one must address the needs of the constituents. Sometimes addressing these needs becomes unrealistic when meeting one member's needs becomes a full-time job, while the leader still has to deal with everyone else's. In addition, the leader also has to deal with his own challenges. The authors acknowledge that the leader's cultural background can affect his value system. These unique areas affect the leader. The authors suggest looking into the best practices of the most responsible institutions and learning from their experiences.

It is also crucial to mention that the Church is an institution that comprises diverse individuals with many skills, some of which are not in church leadership roles, yet they are leaders in their lives outside of the Church. Other authors look at volunteer leadership within the Church. The Church, made up of many members, has a high percentage of volunteers. Researchers emphasized that there is not much research on volunteerism within the Church (Hayward & Krause, 2014). However, the Church relies heavily on volunteers to help with programs and to teach classes.

Many churches whose members are now older need to retire from these leadership roles due to declining health (Hayward & Krause, 2014) present another challenge for leadership which must now fill the gap. The surprising discovery in this study was that lay leaders enjoy serving as leaders. As these leaders aged, they did not experience the same physical difficulties as those who volunteered in a church. The authors reported that lay leadership positions might contribute to health benefits distinct from those experienced by the rank and file (Hayward & Krause). This study's brilliant discovery has allowed further research to consider the health benefits of a lay leader's position and its importance in the Church's effectiveness in the 21st century.

In the 20th century in America, many churches got involved in their members' sociopolitical issues because of social injustice. Likewise, the Church of the 21st Century needs to get involved in the racial prejudice against its members. However, this fight sometimes seems only to affect younger African American men. Because of their people's experiences, some leaders have adapted the practice of getting involved when there is social injustice. Houston and Todd (2013), in their study of 176,901 participants nested within 1,938 congregations, examined them to see what role social justice played within the lives and practices of the congregation. They tested for social processes such as religious attendance at worship services and extra-worship participation to bond social capital awareness and a congregational norm for justice. Also, they investigated how the realization of the congregation has affected its involvement in the Church. Their study's findings showed that leaders would adjust their leadership style to accommodate their people's needs. However, the data showed that their fight for social justice was for the congregation. The researchers also revealed that church attendance and worship showed a decisive battle for social justice. Church attendance and worship did not affect the leadership or the congregation's fight for social justice outside of the congregation (Houston & Todd, 2013).

### **Challenge of Social Issues**

There are many social issues leadership must handle. In the inner-cities, leadership styles have evolved to meet the demands and the needs of its congregations. Kaplan et al. (2015) investigated immigrants from Ghana. Immigrants bring various issues leaders must address. In interviews, the authors reported that besides health, employment, and permanent shelter issues, these immigrant members needed programs to gain marketable skills for better work. They also had different diets, which led to various health issues and came from different environments,

contributing to their adjustment to the American way of life. These individuals found that when they stayed together and networked, they could help each other survive. Leadership has to assist these individuals and provide a place for them to meet and form a greater community. The community psychologist must work with church leadership to help these individuals adapt to their new culture.

The fight for human rights also molds leadership styles that developed around culture and class. They practice benevolent and benevolent-authoritative leadership styles in India's businesses (Karadakil et al., 2015). The authors point out that it did not matter what type of leadership style was used; conflict is an issue that all leaders must handle. The benevolent leader treats his employees like family members and deals with conflict in a caring way. In contrast, the benevolent-authoritative leader uses an avoidance style with his employees and toward conflict. The benevolent leader's nurturing, caring, and accommodating style takes care of his employees as he would his family members, and by keeping them happy, they conform and are more productive. Thus, the benevolent leader is more effective in his leadership style in both leading and managing conflict. On the other hand, the benevolent-authoritative leader does not have the same level of success in conducting and managing conflict.

Speakes-Lewis et al. (2011) examine the megachurch in the African American Community. They explain that there is a historical connection with most Black churches in the United States, and the megachurch is no different. Many of these churches were established in response to slavery and the Civil Rights Era. Their focus centered on empowerment. Transformational leadership also empowers its members towards change. Although they did not identify their leadership style, they practiced its principles. The authors also pointed out that the Black Church had to respond to segregation strategically. Freedom, justice, and equal rights were

fought for by the Black Church. The authors argue that the focus of Transformational leadership has changed; they believe the Black Church has moved toward American modernity. The concept of American modernity is a move towards individualism and wealth. The authors conclude that the African American (Black) church has moved from its core purpose of community empowerment to meeting the community's social needs.

Service and Guess (2015) note that leadership advantage focuses on People Quotient (PQ) as a leadership style. This style of leadership focuses on relationships by paying close attention to people. Leaders take time to develop the skills and learn how to relate to people. Leaders learn to be open with people by allowing them to know them as a person, learning how to be a part of a team, and learning how not to stereotype people for their perspectives. The authors state that people want a leader who can give direction, inspiration, validation, and with whom they can have a relationship. People want to know the leader pays attention to their needs and their wants. People Quotient leader develops relationships with people because they take the time to do meaningful things with others. The authors believe organization PQ leaders will survive because they care for people. This leadership style is favorable because its core focuses on relationship building and serving people.

One author points out that love is a virtue and an effective leadership style (Senander, 2013). This author looked at three Jesuit leaders: Pope Francis, Father Gregory Boyle, S.J., and Father Klaus Mertes, S.J., and noted that their core leadership style is love. These leaders are a part of a spiritual foundation that has its core belief in unconditional love. The author recognized that this form of leadership is not just for the Church. The world of business uses many leadership styles. She also writes that an executive from J.P. Chase learned that practicing unconditional love is a means for leadership growth. There are four principles of pillars for Jesuit

formation: self-awareness, ingenuity, love, and heroism. These are the principles that the business executive practiced and was successful. Leaders learn to practice love by meditating on the love of God through His son Jesus.

In looking at leadership styles and job satisfaction, Rowold et al. (2014) examined six leadership styles to determine which constructs are essential to predicting job satisfaction, affective commitment and perceived job performance. The leadership forms are Transformational, Transactional, Laissez-faire, Consideration, Initiating Structure, and Leader-Member Exchange (LMX). In their investigation, the authors examine these styles in the profit and not-for-profit setting. They assessed that LMX was the most critical leadership construct for perceived job satisfaction, followed by Transactional leadership and Initiating Structure. For commitment, the Initiating Structure was the essential leadership construct, followed by Transactional leadership and LMX. For perceived job performance, the Initiating Structure was most important, followed by Consideration and Transformational leadership. For their comparison between for-profit and non-profit and the importance of Leadership Construct, Transformational leadership has proven more effective in non-profit institutions because it provides genuine motivation in the absence of external incentives. Transformational leadership was more important in the for-profit sector than in the non-profit sector for perceived job performance. Transactional leadership was more important for predicting job satisfaction in the non-profit area than in the for-profit sector. The authors acknowledge that the study only focused on leadership, and fellowship was missing. These leadership styles can prove beneficial for leaders because each brings a unique set of ideas and practices that will support an institution's goals and mission.

Rothausen (2017) focused on the idea that effective leadership is engaged in leadership development. The author points out that leadership development finds its roots in human development. Leadership self-development occurs when a person takes responsibility for initiating, sustaining, and evaluating his leadership capacities in their area as a leader. When a leader focuses on his development, he gains skills to understand himself and those he serves. When he learns to follow his own identity, he learns to understand others' character, feelings, ownership, and autonomy. Interestingly, the author mentions that when a leader focuses on moral development, he must look at his business decision-making and interactions with others; also, he must look at his intentional practices. To maintain holistic health, the author believes leaders must practice physical exercise to keep their bodies and minds healthy. The author also points out that the leaders must be true to themselves by acknowledging their faults and change how they work with others.

For leaders to investigate the structure and effectiveness of their leadership, there must be a measure they can use to give them data to assess their progress. Leadership Practices Inventories (LPI) give leaders a tool to examine their leadership progress. Within this model, there are Five Practice frameworks consistent with transformational leadership models (Posner, 2016).

The author investigates the five leadership practices:

1. Model the way.
2. Inspire a Shared Vision.
3. Challenge the Process.
4. Enable others to act.
5. Encourage the heart.

The author got his sample from the LPI normative database, which included nearly 2.8 million responses to the LPI online from 2007 through 2015. Over 130,000 men and over 100,000 women comprised the sample. The internal validity was robust, but overall female leaders' scores was significantly higher than male leaders ( $p < 0.001$ ). The final study findings showed that 94% agreed or strongly agreed that the LPI was a useful tool for understanding their leadership development needs. 89% agreed or strongly agreed that the LPI helped develop their professional development plan; 95% decided it was helpful to measure how others perceived their leadership, and 85% agreed that the LPI could show changes in their leadership capability. Therefore, the data showed that there are strong reliability and validity to the LPI.

McMurray et al., (2010) examine leadership and its influence on individuals in non-profit organizations. The authors felt that it was essential to explain the difference between Transactional and Transformational leadership. They explained that Transformational leadership is defined as pursuing collective goals through leaders and followers' mutual tapping. This is a leader who engages the heart and minds of others. Transactional leadership involves exchanging one thing for another among leaders and followers. This is a leader who helps followers identify how to accomplish their desired goals. The study concluded that both leadership styles have a positive effect and influence on volunteers who support non-profit agencies.

Winslow (2017) suggests that new demands are taking the forefront of ministry in the changing socio-political, economic, cultural, and immigrant diverse nations. Employers often turn to "marketplace chaplains" to improve their work with their employees. In the last 15 years, this author points out that Marketplace Ministries has grown from a relatively small company that served a few client-companies in north-central Texas to an international organization of over 2,875 chaplains who service 633 companies and 580,000 employees (Winslow). Data highlights

that the individuals who seek ministry from a marketplace chaplain do not go for ministers carrying Bibles of any size; they also do not wear religious garb; they do not sing spiritual songs. Chaplains are hired to help people live a better quality of life through positive affirmations without a holy God's commitment.

The author mentioned that it challenges a pastor's sense of identity when expectations fail and their ministry atrophies. Due and Due (2018) examine how the challenges that pastors experience within ministry sometimes lead to depression. These authors believe that pastors must have a healthy outlet. There must be someone they can talk to about the challenges they are experiencing. Cafferata (2017) points out that while there is data available concerning church closures, there is very little research on the effect church closure has on the pastors' well-being. A gap exists in the literature since no specific study has been done on the loss of ministry and pastors' grieving process (Cafferata). This author points out that Life Changes Scales are used to measure stress. The researcher measured that declining church attendance and financial challenges put a strain on pastors' well-being and affect their quality of life. Another author highlighted that pastors feel shamed by losing status and struggle with feeling devalued (Gilbert, 2003). Other authors point out that the Church has a shortage of clergy.

The Roman Catholic Church needs clergy trained to serve in its mission (Joynt & Dreyer, 2013). These authors also report that the Protestant churches face distribution or placement challenges. The correct compensation is not available for those who received higher education training. Joynt and Dreyer report that although the Catholic and Protestant Churches face two distinct challenges, these challenges add another stress level to leadership. Other researchers conducted a 20-year qualitative study with 285 evangelical pastors; the areas of their focus were vision conflict and compassion fatigue (Spencer et al., 2012). In these cases, the authors

concluded that vision conflict occurs when ministry experience differs from ministry outcome; compassion fatigue occurs at every ministry level for those genuinely called by God. In looking at the quality of life, other authors point out that this can be subjective for different leaders.

Prevost (2016) points out in her research that when leaders have a vast support network, this improves their quality of life. For the denominations who have retreats that bring leaders together, the outcome has been positive and helped improve the quality of life amongst leaders.

### **Medical and Health Challenges**

Individuals with underlying health issues and older individuals are at higher risk from COVID-19 (Xie et al., 2020). These authors point out that going digital over the internet was necessary; however, individual challenges occurred in helping senior members through the learning curve of joining and viewing the service online. In addition to these current challenges, the church faces an array of health and medical problems. African Americans (AAs) deal with health risk factors such as diabetes, hypertension, obesity, and overweight, all of which fall into risk factors that can be critical (Brand, 2017). Felix et al. (2003) found that about one-third of the residents regularly attend church in a low-income community. The individuals who attend church have many positive health care practices. These authors also report that the women are 20% to 80% more likely to visit the dentist, monitor their blood pressure, and have a yearly mammogram compared to those who do not attend church. Lumpkins et al. 2016 report that colorectal cancer (CRC) is the third most commonly diagnosed cancer among men in the United States and African American men are at higher risk. The Black church has served as an exceptional influence on the African American community by increasing awareness within the church community (Pullins et al., 2020). These authors' research also showed a high correlation between those who attend church and healthier dietary practices. These authors also point out

that this study is the first to engage in a research partnership with the leadership of a faith-based health conference that publicized this data. Churches have continued to play a significant role in providing church-based health initiatives that focused on congregational and community health programs (Bolger et al., 2018). These authors highlight that while Black churches provide information about health programs, they also sponsor hundreds of church- outreach programs that benefit congregants and the community.

Researchers observed that the community of African American churches trusted the vital health information they found at health fairs (Harmon et al., 2014). These authors reported that the one constant challenge within these church communities was the lack of or inadequate medical insurance. However, they highlighted that most of the churches in their research provided support to help community members maneuver through the social system to get benefits that helped them gain needed health care. In their research, Rowland and Isaac-Savage (2014) pointed out that there was discrimination in health care and health disparities among ethnic and racial groups. The African American Church (AAC) recognized this and add it to its fight to help members and the community combat these injustices. In addition to the systematic marginalization of ethnic groups, African Americans were on top of the list. They also observed vast disparities in health care research for African Americans (Rowland & Isaac-Savage, 2014). Another author highlighted the importance of volunteerism to help push health care within the AAC (Stewart, 2015). This author reported that church members who are health care workers play a crucial role within the church. During the HIV epidemic, church members in the health care field brought urgency and preventative methods to the church leadership and its members. Stewart (2015) pointed out that the church proactively worked with outside agencies to provide service to those infected and living with HIV. They found that African American pastors were

strategically in a leadership position that fostered the trust of its membership and community (Harmon et al., 2018). The trust that these spiritual leaders gained transcended the pulpit. Many individuals listened and followed the counsel of their pastors. These authors also noted that poor health disproportionately affects the African American communities because of increased chronic disease within their communities.

### **Economic Challenges**

Liu et al. (2017) noted that in many states, the share of income held by the top percentile experienced a prolonged period of stability after World War II, followed by a substantial increase in inequality during the 1980s, and continues today. These authors' research pointed out that social scientists recommended combating the inequality problem by increasing social capital to help individuals succeed economically. Financial institutions require collateral from anyone to get a loan for small businesses or to purchase a property. Researchers pointed out that for the average American, it was highly improbable for them to have collateral to gain trust from the banks (Liu et al., 2017).

Cassano and Benz (2019) highlighted 20th-century modern-day red-lining and school segregation in Flint. Neoliberal policy decisions deliberately set in place and rendered Flint's African American population invisible and nearly powerless through emergency management. As these authors explain, the oxymoron of this whole incident was that the *New Yorker* magazine interviewed the chief executive of Oakland County, who claimed that he had recommended that they put a wall or fence around Flint. Cassano and Benz (2019) explained that Flint residents are primarily African Americans and are the most impoverished metropolitan area in the United States.

Economic challenges face African American communities and disproportionately affect many with chronic disease and poor health (Harmon et al., 2018). Researchers also reported that many individuals from underrepresented low-income populations turn to their pastors for emotional support before seeking medical or psychiatric help (Payne, 2017). This author assessed that it could be economically challenging for pastors in low-income populations to receive financial rewards for their services. However, most of the pastors interviewed felt fulfillment from what they did because it was God's purpose for them to work in their community (Payne, 2017).

Researchers looked at one hundred African American church leaders in South Los Angeles (Maxwell et al., 2019). Researchers report that South LA citizens have a household income that is 100% below the federal poverty level. Furthermore, 42% of adults in this area have less than high school education. Maxwell et al. (2019) examined how prejudiced the penal system is towards lower-class citizens. The researchers believe that African American pastors play a crucial role in many areas within the community. These pastors help bridge the gap by providing academic services, health services, food pantries, and job referrals (Maxwell et al., 2019). Le et al. (2016) compared the documentation through a historical account of African Americans' religious behavior, included attending church services, praying, reading scriptures, and meditating regularly. The faith community and its relationship with its members have made religious participation holistically rewarding (Le et al., 2016). The church has become a haven for its members and those in need. Taylor et al. (2017) report that the African American church exchanges four types of instrumental support: transportation, help with chores, financial assistance, and help during illness. The African American church dedicates its support to its members holistically. Researchers also point out that the churches support their members

financially based on the church's ability to assist. The church allocates its financial support through the benevolence funds (Taylor et al.).

### **Challenge of Dedicated Followers and Church Attendance**

Church attendance is the measure by which most church leaders assess dedication and religious practice (Rossi & Scappini, 2014). These authors looked at church dedication and religious practice. They found that the oldest members within the church who are the most dedicated are ages sixty-five and above, and amongst these women are the most dedicated. Other researchers advocated that social scientists look to the future of religiosity (Brenner, 2016). This author also highlighted researchers' concern that the path of modernization will lead to a future without religion. The author highlights the discovery that scientists' concerns are that religious practice plays a crucial role in communities' social development. Ellison et al. (2007) point out that church membership, church attendance, participation levels in congregational activities, and Bible study all help give each individual the platform for those who are experiencing domestic violence to say something. These authors point out that church attendance and participation have spiritual and social benefits; they also found that domestic violence is higher among African Americans and Latinos than non-Hispanic Whites. These findings give credibility to their concerns that the future of religiosity is a concern of social scientists because of the many social benefits that church attendance and religious dedication offer the community.

Other authors suggested that individualization, urbanization, women's emancipation, and loosening of traditional norms created a liberal world of autonomy and freedom (Van Ingen & Moor, 2015). Researchers claimed that economic inequality and existential security lead to a greater need for religion. However, one threat to church attendance and dedication is within the postmodern world's change that divorce has become a right available on-demand. These authors

point out that the rise in self-culture directly results from the increased divorce rates. They also point out that this self-culture leads to fragmentation, which has also affected social network. This individualization does not bring social isolation, but rather more loose, informal, less complicated social ties. Individualization also takes away from the harmony of social unity within the communities. There has been a struggle within the black community to seek mental health counseling (Van Ingen & Moor). Kam et al. (2019) contributed in their research that previous surveys show that African American men are at the lowest percentile of all racial groups to seek mental health counseling.

Other researchers also point out that religiousness and mental health are more robust for women than men in the United States (Kvande et al., 2015). Cultural stereotypical traditions have played a significant role in creating dogmatic behavior towards seeking help when an African American man is experiencing difficulty in his life. Other researchers uncover that, according to secularization predicted that there would be an inevitable decline in religious participation as societies move to become more pluralistic; this leads to a decrease in religious dedication and participation (Wollschleger, 2017). Tosi and Oncini (2020) point out that positive intergenerational relationships between parents and children positively affect one's religiosity. They also point out that the cultivation and maintenance of strong intergenerational familial bonds is a fundamental teaching within religious institutions. Authors recognized that church attendance or religiosity and health could also mediate a healthier lifestyle and social cohesion amongst church members (Bruce et al., 2017).

## **Related Literature**

### **Biblical Leadership and its Challenges**

Patterson (2016) points out that Biblical leadership is marked by humility and powered by love. He highlights that the book of Revelation highlights the deeds and misdeeds of leaders. Although the book reveals that leaders are seated with Christ in His Kingly position, Christ's descent and work on the cross afforded to man the opportunity to receive grace to live a better, more victorious life personally and in leadership. In other words, Christ made way for leaders to have good deeds. This author points out that one challenge that Biblical leaders have to overcome is misdeeds. A biblical foundation takes us back to the book of Genesis, where God is seen as "Elohim" which is plural and means the Trinity – the divine community (Patterson, 2016). In practicing the biblical model of leadership, leaders will lead as a team. Patterson (2017) concludes that Biblical leadership is egalitarianism and not authoritarian. The goal of biblical leadership is inclusion and autonomy under the governance of sound Biblical doctrine.

Biblical leadership carries the responsibility of focusing on the spiritual development of the people they serve (Kopiczko, 2017). In the book of John, Jesus said to Peter, do you love me – feed my sheep (John 21:15-17, KJV). The leader's role is to teach the people how to develop the same social mindset towards God's Kingdom and the Church's work to make disciples of men (Kopiczko, 2017). The heart of Biblical leadership is servant leadership and shepherd leadership (Resane, 2020). The leadership challenge is to lead the people by demonstrating servanthood in serving others and shepherding by being an example of Christ's follower. The challenge within leadership is integrity, materialism, pride, lack of credibility, and theological training. The Church's mission is to teach believers so they can continue the work that Jesus

began. Jesus cleanses and judges the temple in Matthew, chapter 23. This allows the Church to note that God has providence and judges wrong (Viljoen, 2018).

Biblical leadership is confronted with contextualizing biblical principles within people's culture and science (Kessler, 2013). The author points out that it becomes challenging to separate culture and science from biblical truth. Interpretation must be devoted to biblical theology, specifically those of the New Testament (Schneiders, 2016). Leadership finds it challenging to embrace culture without violating Biblical doctrine. Leadership is then also charged to practice and demonstrate Biblical spirituality (Kessler, 2013). The author points out that culture's practice becomes problematic when society believes that its leadership is authentic. When culture violates the Bible's sound doctrine, the people must embrace Biblical teachings (Kessler, 2013). Where culture is a firm foundation of the society, Biblical leadership must attempt to find the middle ground of connection and build upon that ground when presenting biblical leadership principles (Hibbert & Hibbert, 2019). The goal is to find the point where the home culture and the local culture can recognize the values concerning biblical leadership and the moral principles in which it upkeeps.

Servant leaders are determined by a natural desire to serve others (Magezi, 2015). The scriptures state: "But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant" (Matthew 23:11, KJV). Magezi (2015) explores the Biblical truth that Biblical leaders serve their people. However, in many churches today, servanthood is sent in the opposite direction of what the scripture states. The practice of servanthood has become another challenge for the Church in the 21st century. Sosler (2017) points out that in the Gospel of John chapter 21, Jesus asked Peter, do you love me, and when Peter admitted that he did love Him, Jesus said, feed my sheep. In other words, Jesus told Peter to take care of the people. Biblical leaders are also challenged by the words that

Jesus spoke that the “last should be first, and the first shall be last” (Matthew 20:16, KJV). The foundation for Biblical leadership is Servant leadership (Slater, 2020). This author points out that leadership must be humble in the eyes of God. When leadership postulates that they will enter into the Kingdom of Heaven first, their reasoning is flawed and does not line up with scripture (Slater, 2020).

Biblical leadership has a mission to carry out - the Great Commission. Alawode (2020) approached biblical leadership from the assignment of the Great Commission. He also shared that Paul’s mission was to fulfill the assignment of Jesus by planting churches to carry out the good news of salvation to the world.

He also highlighted that God desires that no one should perish. Therefore, the Church’s leadership mission should be to evangelize the communities through the Good News of the Gospel. In Micah, chapter 2, Jesus is seen as a Shepherd king (Boloje, 2020). This author further analyzes that as a king, one takes care of the people. As mentioned previously, leadership’s role is to build up and take care of the flock, as the Shephard would take care of the sheep.

Stenschke (2010) explored in the Early Church when leaders realized it was time to step back and allow the individual who was anointed by God to lead at particular junctures within the Church’s early history. As this research explores Biblical leadership, we must pay attention to women’s role in leadership. In 1 Corinthians 14:33-36, the Apostle Paul instructs the Church to have the women save their disrupting questions until they go home and ask their husbands (Ademiluka, 2017). This author also references the Apostle Paul’s writings in Romans 16:7, where he salutes the apostles, including Junia, a female apostle. Female leaders’ experience challenges as pastors or leaders of ministries are still challenges that many ministry women still face in the 21st Century. The reference to women as the weaker vessel 2 Timothy 2:20-21 is not

a reference to women's liturgical leadership (Ademiluka, 2017). Paul, who instructed the women to be silent and not disruptive in the Church, also greeted Nympha and the Church in her house (Ademiluka, 2017). The author points out that the Apostle Paul's counsel to the Church at Corinth should not be taken out of context.

### **Summary**

The importance of any church within any community is its ability to help meet extended families' needs. When a nation goes through economic, political, and health challenges, the Church plays a crucial role by offering a helping hand supporting its members and the surrounding community. Leadership plays the most critical role within the Church. The leaders are called to serve God and follow the teachings of Christ. When leadership does not provide an institution that is transparent and interdependent on all who play a role within its structure, leadership becomes hollow and weak. Leaders need people to help them maintain and survive. The struggle that leadership faces in the 21-Century is difficult because a high percentage of challenges to leadership result from human behavior. When the institution must deal with the fallout, the house cleaning investment takes away from its goals and vision for the future and its credibility.

## **Chapter Three: Methods**

### **Overview**

This research examines various leadership styles and their effectiveness and success in the areas of their focus. Many institutions' leadership focus their effectiveness on providing a product to their customer. These institutions measure their success with their customers' satisfaction and the longevity and success of their institutions. Their success is the ability to see production growth (outcome) and gain in their assets (income or wealth). As an institution, the Church also provides a service to its members—to the entire family—from birth to the grave. As an institution, the church majors in teaching the morals that its members should practice. The result: the Church provides services to its members who, in the long haul, will have a better quality of life. To offer this service to its members, leadership must incorporate within its practices the skills that will help its members live a better quality of life. In contrast, minimal research looks specifically at the quality of life, including the church leaders' life fulfillment.

The central role of church leadership is to provide all-around spiritual and life skills to its members. We must examine the Church service ecology and population to determine the leader's effect as a minister and person. When providing care to congregations who put their trust in leadership, the leadership should be stable. However, mental, emotional, psychological, and physical expenditure occurs with each leader. These expenditures produce a personal challenge for these leaders. Leaders should be “strong” individuals who can go through internal pain and disappointments. To fail at this can lead to psychopathy that plays out in abnormal behavior. For purposes of this study, the ecology of the congregation is based on one church per 1,000 community residents. When there is one church representing 1000 community residents, there is a positive response to members' participation in voluntary services and attendance. Researchers

noted that at the community level, an increase in the number of churches per 1,000 persons significantly associated with a higher score on the composite religious participation measure ( $b = 0.083$ ;  $P < 0.001$ ) (Blanchard et al., 2014). When every 1,000 residents can be represented by a church, the ecology of the community is positively affected. Neighborhoods are more communal and can provide a safe and pleasant place for families to raise children.

Considering the critical role that church leadership plays in the community's lives, we must find better ways to care for leaders and protect the community from disappointment and devastation because of abnormal behavior from leadership. Accountability must exist on various levels, starting with the financial, spiritual, and moral. Researchers have concluded that having a 2x2 system and having individuals sign off on all transitions with the financial operations of the Church helps to maintain accountability (Hoos, & Bollmann, 2012). It is safer for financial responsibility if the Board appoints teams rather than having leadership do the appointing.

The question that leaders must answer is: Whom do we glorify? (Livesay, 2011). Leadership responsibilities can overwhelm and cause leaders to feel entitled because of how much they give of themselves. The lack of checks and balances is one of the greatest dangers to leadership. Leadership faces seduction in the arena of finances; they also face challenges with sexual immorality. Being in a position of power puts each individual in a very vulnerable place and opens doors for exalting his humanity over the divine. Leadership must glorify God before the people. A great example of leadership refusing to praise God was during Moses's headship while the children of Israel were in the wilderness (Num. 20:10-11).

### **Design**

The most effective design for this study is a phenomenological research design. This focus gives place to lived experiences. According to Moustakas (1994), phenomenology was

developed by Edmund Husserl, who developed a philosophic system rooted in subjective openness. This radical approach to science was criticized and laughed at; however, Moustakas also acknowledges that it was as early as 1765 in philosophy and occasionally in Kant's writing that phenomenology was used. Because this study deals with human lived experiences and behavior, the phenomenological qualitative research method is the best method for this study. The design in this study is a focus on phenomenology. It is essential to hear first-hand information on how leadership in small Black churches experienced challenges. The design of this research examines the phenomenon of the challenges that clergy in small Black churches face in the 21st century. The qualitative research will capture the description, meaning, and essence of each leader's experience (Moustakas, 1994). This author also notes the importance of a researcher following a transcendental phenomenological approach to engage in a disciplined and systematic effort to set aside individual prejudgments regarding the investigated phenomenon. Phenomenology research attempts to uncover the truth by going beyond the subjective veil of human experience to the underlying, objectively true reality (Aagaard, J. (2017). A qualitative researcher assumes that others' perspectives are meaningful, knowable, and explicit (Cypress, 2018).

This research has a qualitative design and seeks to answer some broad questions: What are the strategic leadership styles relevant for the Church's challenges in the 21st century? And which will result in a better quality of life for church leaders? This research aims to identify a higher level of success in individual leadership styles versus others. Data shows that churches are closing at an alarming rate (Barrick, 2018). In his research, Barrick examined the results from the data he gathered in his interviews. To his astonishment, many people he interviewed said the Church is not relevant to them. For others, he found that the postmodern thought they seek

answers to is, “who am I, and why am I here?” and seek solutions to help them gain relevance. Leaders offer a quality of life that many admire. The focus is to interview leaders, to examine the leadership style they have been using, and to examine their specific responses to each question. The focus will also take an evaluative look at their ministry fulfillment to see the areas directly from their leadership style.

This research will provide data that talks about various leadership styles in combatting challenges and the overall quality of life leading to leadership. The hope is to open the gap and provide a bridge towards future research on church leadership that points towards a better quality of life despite challenges. Leaders must examine their personal views towards leadership because their leadership style can influence others to be the best they can be and have the best quality of life. Leadership gives others a living example of hope by demonstrating how faith in God and knowing that God loves one positively affect one’s well-being (Terry & Cunningham, 2020).

### **Interview Questions**

Table (1) Interview Questions

1.	How long have you been with this institution?
2.	From your experience, what is a typical day working here?
3.	From your experience, how do you deal with congregants who may have mental health issues?
4.	Based on your experience, what are the most prosperous areas of your institution?
5.	Can you describe the areas of ministry that need to improve and why?
6.	From your experience, how are the members doing with biblical education / spiritual growth?
7.	How would you describe the overall health of the congregants?

8.	How would you describe the overall health of the leaders?
9.	Tell me about your work experiences at this institution.
10.	From your experience, how do you handle a crisis?
11	Could you describe the success of the institution over the past five years?
12.	From your experience, compared to similar institutions, how well is this one doing?
13	How would you describe your emotional and mental state after dealing with challenges or conflicts?
14	From your experience, how have these challenges affected your family relationship - negative or positive?
15	From your experience, how have ministerial challenges affected the growth of the ministry - negative or positive?
16	Describe from your experience, how ministerial challenges affected the overall quality of family life.
17	From your experience, how has your leadership style affected your quality of life - negative or positive?

The questionnaire's focus is to get a solid footing on the leadership style that churches are using. Some churches do not ascribe to a particular leadership style. However, using the correct balance of questions could help to identify the form of any church's practices. By examining the Lit review and looking at the leadership styles in the interview, this researcher can then compare the similarities and differences in the successful methods. The researcher will use a qualitative method to analyze the data.

The literature on leadership styles looks at the outcome of the leadership style and the result it produces. The current research gap is that they do not look at the quality of life of the leader. The leadership style that looks at some aspect of quality of life is *Transformational Leadership*. The authors Brandt and Edinger (2015) examined *Transformational Leadership* in teams to see how effective it has been. They also looked at male versus female to see if gender made a difference. The transformational style of leadership focuses on influencing people to become better at what people do. It gives people the autonomy to be creative, to accomplish their goals. This leadership style also inspires others to be their best selves and looks at their quality of life. This leadership also motivates people to work in teams. The authors surmised that women are more effective than men in this form of leadership style. However, they also stated that overall, individuals who are extroverts are more successful than introverts. In examining this statement, gender is more of an issue with male and female introverts. The literature shows that because *Transformational Leadership* offers people qualities that help them become more productive about life, it affects them overall and improves their quality of life.

### **Setting**

For this research study, the setting was the Zoom platform. This platform allowed the participants the convenience of having an appointment that fit into their schedule. All the participants in this study were over the age of eighteen. They also pastored for over five years. In addition, all pastors held a bachelor's degree or higher. Five pastors acknowledged they were first-generation college graduates or higher in their families. This study gathered information on their experiences of challenges in the pastoral field and how it affected them and their families.

### **Participants**

There were ten participants chosen for the process of purposeful sampling (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This sampling allows the researcher to choose participants that will best inform this research inquiry about the research problem. They all have a story to tell about their lived experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The sample size was determined to help keep the data informative and manageable for this study.

In order to take part in this study, the participants must be 18 years or older and have been pastoring a small Black church (fewer than 200 members) for five years or more. Since the researcher is a member of the Church community and a seminary graduate, word of mouth was put out that pastors would be needed to be a part of this study. Participants contacted the researcher via telephone and email to voice their interest in the study. Upon approval from the IRB, the researcher then sent emails to the ten pastors with a recruitment letter and research guidelines. However, two of the pastors were busy with assignments and could not participate during this time frame. The research then focused on the remaining eight participants. Each participant received a Consent Letter. (See Appendix D). The letter explained the nature of the research study, what the study would be about, and its purpose. It also explained what would happen in each procedure and the length of time for the session. The letter shared how each participant could benefit from the study with minimal risk and that protection was provided for all personal information. It was made clear that participation in this study would be voluntary, with no compensation. There also would be no cost to participants to be a part of this study. Finally, the letter notified the volunteers that they could withdraw from the study by contacting the researcher. The researcher included his contact information to all volunteers, including address, phone numbers, and email address.

The recordings of the Zoom interviews would be kept private on a personal desktop computer that is password protected and only used by this researcher. Published reports would not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records would be stored securely, and only the researcher would have access to the records. Data collected from each participant might be shared for use in future research studies or with other researchers. If data collected from a participant was shared, any identifiable information would be removed before the data was shared.

This researcher would pool the results he gathered from churches around the United States by conducting one-on-one interviews. The process would begin with a meeting. It would be important to note their experiences. The leaders from churches who experienced a leadership crisis with similar experiences, educational training, and leadership styles would be grouped accordingly. The focus would be to examine their leadership style, understand its internal structure, and see whether that leadership had designed the checks and balances needed to manage the crises that this institution can encounter and learn to survive.

Several leaders within these areas experienced challenges that led to the closing of their churches. By interviewing these leaders, the attempt was to identify their leadership structure, which they demonstrated during the crisis. Other leaders across the United States underwent difficulty with their ministries, which led them to leave. One leader who underwent a personal crisis led to closing the Church's door (Lyden, 2018).

### **The Role of the Researcher**

In doing this study, I purposely chose to do a study that was a mixture of various denominations. This mixture allowed me the opportunity to hear from pastors of small Black churches. Although, because of their denominations, some of these pastors had the financial

support they needed to keep their church functional during months of economic hardship, they still had struggles like the non-denominational churches. Because I am a former Navy Chaplain, I also worked with pastors of different denominations; this background also helped provide the sensitivity necessary to work with different liturgical training.

I have been a member of three large churches over the years, all racially mixed congregations. My experience in these churches was all positive, except when the church had to deal with a split in leadership or in the case of infidelity. Only one of these churches did not survive. During the latter part of the eighties and nineties, hearing about or seeing reports about pastoral leadership failure became commonplace.

There were not many reports on small churches or their struggles and challenges. However, working as an associate pastor over counseling, I sat with pastors of small churches who wanted God's blessing on plans that were biblically a violation of God's written word. When these pastors did not get their way, they eventually left and found other ways to implement their desires. Unfortunately, because of their decision to maintain unscriptural standards, two of these pastors are no longer in ministry. I have noticed that having checks and balances in place does help to keep individuals accountable. However, when the senior pastor is in error, it becomes devastating when he refuses correction.

Small churches have been highly influential in the inner city. Many of these pastors have advocated for their people in school and the penal system. It is essential to allow them to share their difficulties and challenges over the years. This interview gave them honor and recognition as an essential institution with the community.

### **Data Collection**

The setting for this research study was through face-to-face Zoom conferences. This setting gave those involved a meaningful experience. Hopefully, the clergy relaxed and felt comfortable enough, given the platform, to clarify their answers when needed. The data was recorded and transcribed for accuracy. The questions for the interview were designed for collecting the data as a result of the research questions. The one-on-one interview allowed the researcher the opportunity to see the participants face-to-face. Pastors experience this same face-to-face experience when they minister to their congregation. This researcher also believes conducting face-to-face interviews demonstrated trustworthiness on the part of the participants.

### **Data Analysis**

The researcher analyzed the data through the processes of Phenomenological Reduction, Imaginative Variation, and Synthesis of Essence (Moustakas, 1994). The data had codes to identify the patterns in each leadership area and its challenges. The purpose helped identify the similarities and differences within the church leadership and saw if the practical outcome varies. The coding process helped the researcher move methodically to a slightly higher conceptual level (Yin, 2015).

The researcher focused on utilizing Mostakas' (1994) modification of van Kaam's analysis method in analyzing the data. The researcher looked at each individual's descriptive expressions of their experiences to identify similarities. The researcher transcribed all recorded interviews for each question. This procedure maintained the accuracy and integrity of the interviews. Since the interview questions' design was with themes in mind, this helped to keep the responses in themes. The researcher examined the data to find all the common themes among the participants.

After gathering the transcribed data for each participant, the researcher then organized the data by each question. This organization also helped summarize or use descriptive coding for each participant's response to the questions (Saldana, 2014). Interview questions helped organize the data, and the researcher identified the common descriptive coding; this helped identify the primary themes. These primary themes also addressed the researched questions.

### **Phenomenal Reduction**

Phenomenal Reduction (PR) application helped the researcher move beyond the mundane to the pure ego, where everything seemed as if it were the first time (Moustakas, 1994). This step was known as Transcendental-Phenomenological Reduction because it transformed the world into mere phenomena (Moustakas, 1994). This author also stated that a complete description gave essential constituents, variations of perceptions, thoughts, feelings, sounds, colors, and shapes. The textual meaning, description, and essence of phenomenon comprised consciousness from an open self's perspective. The account should resemble an accurate account of the actual first-time experience. The researcher informed the participants that the questions were designed to help them share their experiences as they remembered each one.

### **Imaginative Variation**

The second step in this process of data analysis was Imaginative Variation. In his exploration, Moustakas (1994) considered that imaginative variation was a structural differentiation among the infinite multiplicities of the possible and actual cognitions regarding the thing questioned, and this together made up the unity of identifying synthesis. The process of Imaginative Variation was to use imagination to seek meaning by employing variable references through polarities and reversals and looking at the phenomenon from divergent perspectives, roles, functions, or different positions (Moustakas, 1994). The question he asked was, "How did

the experience come to be what it is?” The participants were encouraged to look at their experiences and not judge what happened as correct or incorrect, but to look at each experience as what led to that particular outcome.

### **Synthesis of Essence**

The third step was the Synthesis of Essence. The comprehensive descriptions obtained by the empirical phenomenological approach return to the experience (Moustakas, 1994). This author pointed out that to develop the essence of that situation, the researcher reflected on the units, still mainly expressed in concrete language. This researcher examined the descriptions of the experiences to make the connection, and traced whether each event connected in the short descriptive time or over the years was the build-up to a climax.

### **Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness focused on both the internal and external validity and reliability concepts around the focus data (Deborah Court et al., 2018). Trustworthiness also addressed credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability within the qualitative research study (Amankwaa, 2016). Heppner and Heppner (2004) recommended that since many qualitative researchers followed Lincoln and Guba’s suggestions, this would be an excellent place to establish good scholarship (trustworthiness) of qualitative research. The researcher’s only role was to investigate the experiences shared by each participant in this study. The researcher outlined how the interview was conducted via Zoom, and the data was transcribed from notes and the video recording to help establish trustworthiness.

### **Credibility**

Credibility is a series of techniques that the researchers can use to conduct qualitative research to attain the criteria they outlined (Lincoln, & Guba, 1985). Lincoln and Guba (1985)

described these techniques include prolonged engagement, persistent observation triangulation, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, referential adequacy, and member-checking. To increase the research study's credibility, the researcher allowed the participants to view their transcribed interviews, examining their data before the research was completed (Lincoln and Guba, 1995).

### **Transferability**

A thick description is a strategy used to facilitate transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Amankwaa (2016) stated that when the researcher described a phenomenon in sufficient detail, one could evaluate the extent to which the conclusions drawn were transferable to other times. To allow readers to decide the transferability of the results in this research study, the researcher provided a detailed description of the participants and the process for collecting all data and the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Moustakas, 1994).

### **Dependability**

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested that to establish dependability, the researcher should use a technique known as inquiry audits. The current researcher invited an outside researcher to examine both the process and the research study product (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Dependability was supported in Chapter 4, as the researcher described the steps for data collection and data analysis. The accurate and clear recording of the interview helped to establish dependability. The transcription of data was a direct quote of each, and this increased the dependability of this study. As a result of the many years of practical experience of each participant, the information proved to be dependable.

### **Confirmability**

To establish confirmability, Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommended confirmability audit, audit trail, triangulation, and reflexivity. The audit trail was the research steps taken from the

start of the research project to the development and reporting of findings described transparently. Confirmability was established by allowing the interviewees to view their written transcription for accuracy and adjustments. The information shared was confirmed by the historic information of each pastor's church.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this chapter was to lay out the method used in gathering the data for the study. The design of the study was a phenomenological research design. The interview questions addressed the research questions by gathering the data from these pastors' experiences that look at how their ministry, personal life, and family have been affected by the challenges they experienced. The data was collected through one-on-one recorded interviews. The participants were selected because they met the guidelines to participate. They have been pastoring for over five years and are in the role of senior pastor or pastor. The role of this researcher was to help bridge the gap that exists. Small Black churches have little to no data on their experiences in dealing with challenges in ministry.

## **Chapter Four: Findings**

### **Overview**

This chapter aims to present the data obtained from the pastors who participated in this phenomenological study on the Challenges that Clergy in small Black Churches Face in the 21st Century. In this regard, the study attempts to address the research questions: How do pastoral leaders in small Black congregations describe their experience navigating conflict within their community? How do leaders in the African American church experience the effect and impact that leadership style and job satisfaction have on their families?

This study incorporates pastors, all of which are senior pastors or pastors in their churches. However, of the eight pastors who are a part of this study, only two are senior female pastors. Due to the male work context design of the pastor's role, many women do not fit into the mold; as a result of this contextualization, not many women are in the office of senior pastor (Glanz, 2020). These pastors' ages range from thirty-five to seventy-four years old. They all have served in ministry for over ten years.

### **Participants**

The eight pastor-participants of this study all serve in the Pentecostal denomination from Church of God in Christ to Independent church governed by a Church Board of leaders. All of these pastors have made great sacrifices to the call of God. Four of these pastors are bi-vocational and two do not take a salary from their churches. Of the four full-time and not bi-vocational pastors, two do not take a salary from their churches. One of these two pastors is supported by family members and partners of his ministry.

**Table (2) Participants**

Name	Years in Ministry	Education Level
Participant A	17	Doctorate
Participant B	18	College Degree
Participant C	24	Masters of Divinity/Doctoral Candidate
Participant D	33	Master's
Participant E	37	Doctorate
Participant F	24	College Degree
Participant G	12	PhD Candidate
Participant H	15	PhD

**Participant A**

Participant A serves as a senior pastor for over seventeen years. He is a faithful husband and a loving father and grandfather to his almost thirty children and grandchildren. He is greatly respected by the members of his congregation and by the leaders of his denomination. After he completed his military service in the United States Air Force, he returned to college in his dedication to the ministry. He completed his Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctoral degrees at Liberty University. His congregation moved to a new building through his leadership and paid off the mortgage in seven years. The administration of his church is commendable, (interview with participant A, 2021).

**Participant B**

Participant B has served as the associate pastor for over eighteen years. He is a faithful husband and a loving father. He is a talented musician, artist and photographer. He is also bilingual. He served as a musician in a sister church for about ten years before becoming a pastor in his current church. He also teaches adult Bible study weekly and heads up a team of intercessors for weekly prayer services. Many church members have testified how much they have learned and grown spiritually by being in this church, (interview with participant B, 2021).

**Participant C**

Participant C has served as the senior pastor for over twenty-four years. He was married and is currently single. He grew up in the Church of God in Christ denomination and is presently pastoring an independent Pentecostal church. A Board of Elders governs his church, and he is one of the pastors in his state who submits to an Apostolic Pastoral leader in that state. His congregants respect him, as do also the local police and the jail warden. He makes weekly visits to those who are incarcerated to encourage and minister to them spiritually. He is one of the full-time pastors who submitted to a low income for the first five years of the ministry until the church could financially increase his salary, (interview with participant C, 2021).

**Participant D**

Participant D is a founder of her church and has been pastoring that church for over thirty-three years. In addition to pastoring, she was a school principal with the Department of Education in the City of New York. Her school is located several blocks from the World Trade Center, and she, her staff, and students witnessed the entire incident, including the collapse of the buildings. She has a great passion for serving people. She has been married for over fifty-four years and has three children and grandchildren. Many ministers have gone out from her leadership and started ministries in other states. As an interviewee, she was candid and truthful in sharing any aspect of her ministerial challenges, including the personal ones, (interview with participant D, 2021).

**Participant E**

Participant E is also co-founder of her church and has been pastoring that church for over thirty-seven years. She was first a co-pastor and later became the senior pastor. Participant E is

another pastor who was extremely honest and truthful in sharing all aspects of her religious experiences, including the close and personal challenges. The former senior pastor of the church divorced her and married one of the singers in the church. They have one daughter together who is now in ministry with her. She is a survivor who went through many difficult years after her divorce. She is an excellent minister and has a great heart for God's people. Her church is doing well and has increased financially during the pandemic, (interview with participant E, 2021).

### **Participant F**

Participant F is the founder of his church. He was in ministry for over a decade before he was called to start a ministry in Brooklyn, New York, and has been pastoring there for over twenty-four years. He is married and has three children who are doing exceptionally well, and all have leadership roles in their community: medical doctor, school principal, and pastor. His wife is an educator and an adjunct professor in a college in New York. Participant F is also a director of the number one Christian rehabilitation program funded by the city in the entire state of New York. He has been instrumental in helping to establish it, and worked to gain funding from the City of New York for that historical program for over two decades, (interview with participant F, 2021).

### **Participant G**

Participant G is the founder of his church. He was in ministry as a youth pastor before starting his church over twelve years ago. He is married and has two children. He is currently pursuing a Ph.D. Since his church started, his congregation has grown and had to move to another building. He shared that many men are attracted to the church. A high percentage of young people (ages twenties and thirties) make up most of the church. He says they now pray that the Lord will send more women to the church. In addition, the church grew, and their

finances increased during the pandemic while they were online. They went back to the in-person service on July 11, (interview with participant G, 2021).

### **Participant H**

Participant H is the pastor of a small Church of God in Christ church. He has been in the church most of his life. He has served in that denomination in every area before moving on to be the church's senior pastor for the past eleven years. He is a dedicated pastor and is devoted to serving God's people. He is also a vet of the United States Armed. He is married with two grown boys. His wife also served in the military. He holds a Ph.D. from Liberty University, (interview with participant H, 2021).

### **Participants Response by Question**

Table (3) presents the written response to each question by the participants.

Table (3) Participants Response by Question

<b>Question 1. How long have you been with this institution?</b>	
<b>Participant A</b>	I have been with the Church of God in Christ for fifty-nine years. I have served as a pastor for seventeen years.
<b>Participant B</b>	Since the beginning of 2007, fourteen years.
<b>Participant C</b>	New Life International Center. I have been there for twenty-four years.
<b>Participant D</b>	I am the founder of the church. I found the church on January 1, 1988. The church is now thirty-three years.
<b>Participant E</b>	I have been with the church for the past thirty-seven years. First as First Lady, then as Administrator and now as Senior pastor.
<b>Participant F</b>	I have been pastoring for twenty-four to thirty-five years. Eleven years I was an Associate pastor before I started the church in Brooklyn, New York.
<b>Participant G</b>	I have been with my church for twelve years this month.
<b>Participant H</b>	I have been a pastor with the church for eleven years, but totally with the church for seventeen years.

**Question 2. From your experience, what is a typical day working here?**

<b>Participant A</b>	A typical work day is providing spiritual guidance, leadership, direction, counseling, and other ministerial activities or duties on a weekly basis. I serve as a bi-vocational pastor, therefore, the duties I perform are after 5:00 PM Monday-Friday. My weekends are full-time.
<b>Participant B</b>	We don't have a 9-5 daily workday. We have event-based days that last from one to four hours where we have our regular worship service on Sundays, bible study on Tuesdays and prayer on Thursdays, First Fridays, and Saturdays—each of where the senior pastor and/or I am on hand, and then noon day prayer Monday through Friday which the congregants call in.
<b>Participant C</b>	I would say it varies; it varies. I believe what I have noticed to be consistent in any day is my morning prayer, my word time, my study time seeking to be consistent with that. And I have gone to the church—still go to the church at six in the morning to pray. I might get up by five and start praying at home, but get to the church by six and read and pray. Pray for the members, prayer for myself, pray for the community, and then from there the issues vary. I have had some consistencies; for example, Tuesday and Thursdays have been typically, prior to COVID, my time to go into the Creek County jail to minister an hour and a half to two hours. On Wednesdays we go into the juvenile center to minister, but it can vary because ministry is so dynamic. The unexpectancy of someone going into the hospital that creates another aspect of your routine for the week. A death creates another situation. So, sometimes it varies. But a normal day/week has a kind of routine: devotion, study of the word, sermon preparation. And then in the week you got the time that you meet with your elders, you have your weekly elders meeting; I don't know if that is answering the question. Mondays are my sabbath, and then Tuesday through Fridays I would kind of be active. There is a lot of activity within the community over the years, so I would say it varies.
<b>Participant D</b>	There is no such thing as a typical day. There is no such thing as a typical church. As with all pastors, it is a twenty-four/seven days a week responsibility. I am not going to say a job; it is a responsibility. And, so whether you have a calling while you are doing secular work as well as the work of the ministry, or whether you are just doing only ministry, you have to be on alert all the time to serve God's people.
<b>Participant E</b>	Since we do not have an office, my office is in the home. My typical day is answering the phone, talking to people, and returning calls, and studying.
<b>Participant F</b>	For me, since I have been primarily a bi-vocation pastor, it has been quite challenging. When you talk about a typical day, depending on weekend and weekday; it varies.
<b>Participant G</b>	A typical day. A typical Sunday: Wake up. Spend time with the Lord. Usually, I already have my message together. I have meditated on it. I get up and pray a little bit and worship. Then I get the kids ready, take the dog out. I commute to my church which is about an hour away from where I live. The church did not start that way. We moved to the city that the church was founded in, and our congregation changed. Most of the people were coming from Central Jersey, so we ended up moving the church to Central Jersey to serve the people better. And my wife and I, we commute. A typical day is

	<p>getting the family together, taking the dog out, getting my notes, getting my computer, getting my iPad. We drive an hour there. We usually put on some good gospel music, or something that the kids could enjoy, some gospel music that the kids could enjoy. We get there—I usually get there around nine. Church starts at ten, so at 9:30, usually it is prayer. So, I usually go in my office for about ten to fifteen minutes and pray. The young man who serves as my armor bearer usually meets me there and prays with me, and to see if I need anything. And then we would go into the prayer. We would be praying for about thirty minutes, then we would do praise and worship for about twenty to thirty minutes. We spend that time worshipping God, praising God. Then we go right into the Word. I preach usually for forty-five minutes to an hour to an hour fifteen. I don't do that typically at other churches. I usually preach for forty minutes, but at my church I take my time. I usually preach for an hour, and then give the opportunity for people to come to Christ. Then we have announcements and offering. Then we have the benediction and everybody goes home. I go home if I don't have counseling or anything going on. When I come home, we usually get something to eat and drive home. We spend that time resting with the family. Usually, we try to consecrate Sunday, the Lord's day, to the Lord. We typically try not to do or look at anything that is not Christ-centered, such as movies. We would look at Christian movies or Veggie Tales. We would have family worship later on after dinner where we spend time praying laying hands on the kids, giving them a lesson, and then towards the end of the night, we usually let them have their devices.</p>
<b>Participant H</b>	<p>A typical day? I am different, I am out and about on the street. I am not evangelizing or anything of that nature but just doing day to day ministry with people before I got my courage up.</p>

<b>Question 3. From your experience, how do you deal with congregants who may have mental health issues?</b>	
<b>Participant A</b>	<p>The congregants who may have mental issues are given referrals to see a professional counselor if their current conditions is beyond my level of expertise.</p>
<b>Participant B</b>	<p>We had only had a few. An issue is identified through a discussion with one or more of the elders or teachers who have worked with the congregant. Or if the individual displayed odd behavior through their interactions with others in service, (like once when while praying for others, an individual began to shake the person she prayed for and yelled at them to have faith) the senior pastor or I would have a conversation with her.</p> <p>We would recommend the person agree to submit to discipling from a mature congregant or an elder to help them study and apply the word of God to their lives. If that help is unproductive, then we recommend they work with an outside licensed counselor.</p>

<b>Participant C</b>	<p>Well, we have had a few in our community who have mental health issues. And some have been members of the church; some are middle-aged members of the community. Some have been members of the church. Some have been middle-aged. Some have been teenagers. As a principle, we love them, affirm them, work with them. I spend a lot of time talking to them, listening to them—especially the men who may be going through, but for the most part, if they are in crisis, we refer them to agencies that can assist them, work with the families in regard to that. We have the opportunity to go into those institutions and give them visits. So, we visit them when they are in the institution. A lot of time, Pastor Samuel, people with mental health issues have to want to go and get help, but most of the time they don't. So, these institutions kick in when they become a threat to themselves or a threat to others; so, when they get to that point, that is, when they are now taken to the institutions; so, we try to visit them as part of their therapy and support—especially if they are members of the church.</p> <p>When we go into the jail, we have so many in the jail who have mental health issues, I would say that we need more counselors, more people that we can refer people to, so they are not being sent to the jail due to their mental health issues.</p>
<b>Participant D</b>	<p>Well, one of the things that we believe especially I would say in the minority community: We have a thing where we feel that there is a stigma in going and getting professional help. And so, although they would reach out to the church if they are going through some deep depression or what not; yes, we are able to provide spiritual counseling, but we do encourage them to get professional help. They do need professional counseling, whether or not it's something they feel is an addiction. People are addicted to a lot of things. Everybody always looks at drug addiction and alcohol addiction, but some people are addicted to other things. I found people addicted to shopping; you know? And so, now they are in deep debt and they don't know how to get up from under it. It is causing problems between the husband and the wife and really, it's an addiction that has to be broken. But people don't see mental health issues, only one way and they don't really want to talk about those issues. But I think that we are responsible to recognize what we cannot carry, what we cannot deliver people from, and that is in the sense that people actually need some serious professional help. That even though, like I have a Master's in Guidance and Counseling, but there are things that I am not trained to do with psychological issues. And you have to be honest within yourself as to what you can help and what you cannot do for your congregants. And so, when you are aware of these—and you really need to be able to be aware of the different flags, even those prompts that cause people to go into—have those different challenges—you have to be honest enough to say, "Okay, this is outside my sphere of support. I can still support them spiritually, but at the same time, I can walk them through the process of getting the right kind of help and support that they need".</p>

<b>Participant E</b>	I have not had that experience because no one has expressed that they (had) a need in their family. However, in my conversations with a few members I can tell that there is something wrong.
<b>Participant F</b>	Because my background has been in mental health, we would definitely refer. We will kind of ascertain what the challenges are, and we would try to assist and make referral to the appropriate kind of resources: assessment, therapist, what have you.
<b>Participant G</b>	We usually just love on them as they are. If it really gets out of hand, usually we have therapists inside the congregation, so, if it is something that needs to be addressed, we will encourage them to go to a therapist, or go find one for themselves. We recommend Christian therapists, Christian counseling, but we do not do anything there because we are not equipped, except for praying for them and giving them spiritual advice. We have a list of people that we are in partnership with—Christian counselors—that we would recommend.
<b>Participant H</b>	I typically refer them to the experts. I know my skillsets.

**Question 4. Based on your experience, what are the most prosperous areas of your institution?**

<b>Participant A</b>	The most prosperous areas of this institution—I would have to say the financial support is phenomenal. The ministry purchased a new complex for \$510K in 2013. In the Spring of 2020, the ministry became mortgage-free. The people have sown greatly into this work. For that, I am grateful.
<b>Participant B</b>	Our teaching ministry is the most prosperous because we see results in the lives of those who apply those teachings. It occurs at minimum, every Sunday through the service and Tuesdays through Bible study. The people respond through their testimonies on the word after a sermon is given, or in the case of bible study, through their responses and application of the principles studied a week or more after the lesson. They come back for more, with proof that they were not just listening, but with application in their lives.
<b>Participant C</b>	I am thinking. I really believe our mission department is our strongest department of the church. We faithfully tithe. A tenth of our tithe and offerings go towards missions account. And we sow; we have been sowing all these years into four to five missions organizations. And, we have been able to get teams and go to Mexico; we have a Mexico missions trip scheduled in August. We kind of go twice a year to Mexico in August and in December. We are taking a team of youth to Los Angeles for Missions outreach out there, and we always connect with other churches when we are going to do that, so a lot of members and the teens they get all excited about getting in the car going somewhere. We have been to Africa; we have taken a couple of the members from the church with me. But that is one strong area, but I will say again when you talk about a 24-year period of ministry, and the dynamic of which ministry operates, you may see praise and worship the strongest areas in a season, then it goes through a decline. Then the youth

	are the strongest, then it goes through. Over a period of time, I have not seen anything consistently strong except Missions. Everything goes through an up and down dynamic. Prayer has been strong; I should say the prayer ministry of the church is also prosperous.
<b>Participant D</b>	I think the most prosperous (area) of my church is knowing how to work as a team; that is so valuable, and I have said it to the church a number of times. When we have to get together, and we have to attack something as a theme—like if we have to give a family support when somebody dies in their family, when we have to go outside like on this Saturday when we have done the pantry support, (we have done that for fifteen years), whether it was when we went through Sandy or what we are going through now—we have never missed serving the community twice a month. And we hit that ground running as a team. And that to me is the most valuable—the outreach, and the outreach that is done as the result of team effort.
<b>Participant E</b>	Our prosperous area is working in the community. We have two big outreaches a year. Last year, we had a coat outreach. And this past Saturday, we just had another outreach which was very successful. Dealing with the community, working in the community, and letting the community know that we are there if they need us.
<b>Participant F</b>	Well prayer, our focus, our primary focus, is to develop the church as a house of prayer.
<b>Participant G</b>	Prosperous areas would be the week-by-week teaching. Strong, strong teaching ministry, a lot of times the people would join the church because of the strong teaching ministry. I say that because, whether it is myself, my wife or other ministers, it is the teaching. People come and they get understanding and they are pretty excited and they seem to grow. This has sustained us over the years. People are excited about learning—becoming a disciple—what it means to be a disciple following God. So, I say that teaching is number one.
<b>Participant H</b>	I would say outreach. Any type of outreach.

**Question 5 - Can you describe the areas of ministry that need to improve and why?**

<b>Participant A</b>	The area of this ministry that needs improvement is in building a better relationship with the men in the ministry. For some reason, this is the biggest challenge for me. Men can be prideful, self-willed, and untouchable. In ministry, humility makes all the difference to be relatable and engaging.
<b>Participant B</b>	<u>Discipleship</u> could be improved. Our active membership is under 50. We should be growing in numbers but when we do, we get occasional setbacks by disgruntled seekers looking for nothing more than a handout. They tend to cause a minor fallout when they leave.

	<p><u>Our outreach ministry</u> could use improvement. There are a few members whose hearts burn for the lost, but none ever step up to even look into a ministry to reach people on the streets (or elsewhere) as a group. As individuals, some have reached out to others, and some of these people have become key to our membership.</p> <p><u>Feeding the poor.</u> We don't have a building but could probably either work alongside another ministry that does the same or develop relationships with local groups who feed the poor or something of that nature. There is talk about it but no one has shown a desire perhaps because our membership is based on congregants from three different states which could make the practicality of living in one state, working in another and going to church in yet another more than once a week a problem.</p> <p><u>Sunday school for elementary schoolers</u> had disappeared but was recently restarted by one of the deacons and it needs to be sustained.</p> <p>We have a <u>mentorship ministry</u> in place, but it is floundering due to lack of involvement of the mentor and/or the mentored. It needs to be restructured and given a restart because there is a real need for it.</p> <p>Even during pre-COVID the <u>worship team/music department</u> had shrunk to a one-man band. No one has shown interest in joining a worship team or become skilled enough to play. It is a necessary ministry which cannot remain a one-man team. Again, distance and work make it difficult to come together to rehearse on a regular basis.</p>
<b>Participant C</b>	<p>All of them. Which area needs to improve? I would think the strongest area in the years I have been pastoring that is the weakest is evangelism, it's evangelism. I feel as though people are so busy focused on jobs, and living, and life, and the American dream. The time that it takes to invest in outreach—I know it sounds contradictory that we are strong in missions in one area, and then weak in the local area of evangelism because it is kind of challenging to get people to embrace that their motive for being in church is to win souls to grow the church. There are other areas that need assistance, of course, in the church. Sometimes in the area of discipleship, you have a few that are faithful. But then you are looking at your larger members and they are not faithful, so you want to see an improvement in the saints engaging in the discipleship process, the learning process. You want to see more people volunteering because a small church cannot afford to pay a staff. So, the work that takes place in the church needs to take place through volunteers. And sometimes their expectation is the pastor is going to do all of that. So, you have a big challenge in that area.</p>
<b>Participant D</b>	<p>I think the area that needs to improve is—and I guess we will really face it when we are coming in—is that commitment to not just have the remnant come in or the remnant give the church the level of support it needs</p>

	<p>financially, but also coming together for service on Sundays and especially prayer meetings. And I have found that is happening in large churches as well as small churches, but when it comes to prayer night only ten percent of the church will show up for prayer. And you really need everybody to be on that front line for that altar call. That to me is that area that needs to improve that when we do a call for prayer or a call for sacrificial worship or above the regular order or time for service that not just your remnant shows up, but that the entire congregation comes forward as well. And right now, with everybody being virtual for this year and a half, what we do is the first Sunday for the Lord's Supper, we do come into the building. We do keep separate, but you still have those individuals that are concerned about who was vaccinated. And we have been following CDC regulations the entire time, but I think that all of us, whether it is a big church or a small church, is going to have to work very diligently to get the whole congregation back into the building physically. Come back for that additional time of prayer without having to have a special speaker. You know? Or somebody else come that we don't just get so familiar with each other that we only come if there is someone unique or influential there.</p>
<b>Participant E</b>	<p>Communication. I feel that pastors and those in the community do not communicate well with each other. We think that we all have the Holy Spirit, but the Holy Spirit speaks to us differently. I find that many of them instead of telling you what is wrong would use cliches like, "I am blessed and highly favored". But by communicating with them you find out that is not true. I remember this happened to me with one of our very good members. She said that she was fine and we kept talking, then I asked her to tell me exactly what was wrong, and she started crying. I feel that communication is one of our biggest problems, not only with our congregants, but also pastors. Pastors don't communicate; pastors don't talk. To be honest with you, we don't tell each other the truth. I find that this was a big problem. At a conference in New York, they asked me how many people I had in the congregation. It seems that they (only) want to know how many people I have in the congregation. It seems that they (only) want to know how many people we are ministering to. I always say I minister to those who come every Sunday, not to those who are on the books. Many people are on the books, but we have faithfully thirty-five to forty people that come every Sunday. Those are the ones I minister to. I think that we are not honest with each other. We are trying to let the others know that I have more people than you. It is not about how many people you have. But, I feel that communication is our biggest problem.</p>
<b>Participant F</b>	<p>No question: Administration, I guess. Why? Administration and being able to serve people and position the church for a more sense of excellence.</p>
<b>Participant G</b>	<p>I say that two, three areas that need to improve would be: improve children's ministry, music ministry, and outreach (evangelism).</p>

Children's ministry. We have an older lady who is overseeing the children's ministry. She is really, really, really good. She is teaching with a heart for the children. She is sixty-five and she is in school now getting equipped to serve the children better, but she has been doing children's ministry for a very long time. The reason why that area needs help because there is a lack of—I don't want to say age because age really doesn't have anything to do with it. It is just the mindset of her not understanding growing with the times and learning how to implement technology—implementing things that would help to enhance what she is doing and to better equip her. I have been working with her, trying to help her to think about leadership, and duplicating herself, and understanding that she does not have to do everything herself, but she could utilize – sometimes what she would do is different from what I have envisioned for the children's ministry, and she would come to me with problems instead of being self-directed. I'm trying to help her think about children's ministry in a new way. What would work for her when she was doing it twenty or thirty years ago may not necessarily work for her now. Not the work, the methods. That is one.

The other area I mentioned was music ministry. At one point, prior to the fact that our music ministry is really strong, really, really strong. And a couple of our band members moved to other churches or we redirected the Music Director (MD) to another area. We kind of let him go from that area because it is hard to deal with him as far as his style of leadership. A lot of people have complained about him. We had given him chances upon chances. We have a wonderful minister of music who is wonderful. He could sing better than anybody you could put on the streaming service or CD. But I think that because of the pandemic, (prior to the pandemic things were better) but the pandemic has revealed that we had to let that one individual go. The other music guy had to move to another church because he got married. So, that area is in need of musicians who are willing to play not for a gig, but play for the Lord. We do compensate our musicians, and we will continue to do that, but we do not want to hire hirelings—people just there to be playing because they need money. When money gets involved, it becomes more than just ministry. It becomes a job. It was and it is a job. Black churches from my experience, have had this challenge of musicians. We want our music to sound great, but sometimes we do it at the expense of the culture of the church. And so, the reason why it needs to improve in that area is because we need musicians mainly who are dedicated and committed to the vision of the church and not just having a gig – skillful musicians.

And the last area is evangelism. We are in a highly Hispanic area, and we have tried to do outreach, giving out clothing and food, looking for ways to engage the community, but it has not been successful. And we are really needing help and some wisdom to reach the community. Most of the people, I would say all of our people that go to the church, do not belong to the community. So, our church does not reflect that community. It reflects

	people from all over the world. All over the central Jersey area, but not necessarily that community. We did not necessarily go there because of the community; we went there because there was a building available to us. And we have tried to engage the community, but we haven't been able to crack the code.
<b>Participant H</b>	I would say for my church it is the area of evangelism. I think it is more so in this day and age, people are reluctant to just approach people and invade their privacy. So, people are just kind of reluctant to go and just approach people—safety concerns.

**Question 6. From your experience, how are the members doing with biblical education / spiritual growth?**

<b>Participant A</b>	The biblical education and studies for the ministry are commendable. The congregation attends two biblical study groups, a Young People Willing Workers study, and Sunday School. Both are for adults and children. The ministers, elders, and missionaries of the ministry share in this area of the work. I teach the Mid-week Bible Studies on Wednesday.
<b>Participant B</b>	I would say a third of the congregants attend the Zoom bible study. They participate because of their own desire to develop a meaningful walk with the LORD and they enjoy the experience. We give them breaks every few weeks since most of the adults have 9 to 5 jobs and families.
<b>Participant C</b>	Again, the ones who are—let's say fifteen to twenty percent of the congregants are faithful, consist to Bible study and they are growing, and then the other eighty, eighty-five percent that are not engaging, they are not growing as much. So, there is a correlation between growth and engagement with education because we grow through studying of the word, and through fellowship, and through interaction. So, if your job or the other priorities of life causes you not to engage, that for whatever reason, we can see that you are not growing 'cause you are not getting what you need to grow. And some people feel comfortable with that all they need is Sunday morning service, that is all they need. So, I would love to be able to increase the percentage of the saints who are—would engage the discipleship process. COVID has not helped that situation. COVID has not helped because now Bible study and courses and classes have shifted from the building to online. You would think that online or on the phone would cause them to engage, but we lost some people. So, the number of people has decreased during COVID because they don't want to get on the phone; they don't want to get on the computer. And some don't have computers. Some don't have computers; I hope I am answering your question.
<b>Participant D</b>	Well, I have found—once again; you have that remnant that has stayed focused with the teaching—because even with COVID we have Tuesday night Bible Study. We still have Sunday morning adult Bible class as well as Sunday School for the kids. But the growth for me is not measured in—the fact that we are able to continue the study and we have that remnant that continues to want the study—the growth for me has been the change I have

	seen in how people have handled difficulties in their lives. That is where I have seen that wonderful growth. When loved ones had died, when the money has gotten real funny, you know, when their children are not lining up the way they are supposed to be, how they have handled it, and standing on God's word, and seeing character being developed in individuals who used to be really wonky, but now, you know, you see that they are embracing the word of God and the counsel that you gave them. I have seen that growth and that has been a real blessing.
<b>Participant E</b>	This is a big one. And the reason I say that is because when we were in person, we had fifteen to twenty people coming out for Bible study. Since we been on Zoom, we have eleven. I said what happened. I thought the whole congregation would be on Zoom for bible study. But that was not so. I had to put in my mind that, "hey, they don't want it". However, I have been teaching Survey of the Bible since January, and I have eleven people who come on faithfully and they are growing. I will not put anyone in leadership unless they have some biblical knowledge. We have to know the word of God to be able to minister to people. So, I say that those eleven people are growing; some people say that "I study on my own," but you also need someone to guide you.
<b>Participant F</b>	In the light of this last year and a half, we started, primarily, we turned our entire focus into corporate prayer, spiritual growth. I would say, March 15, 2020, when COVID really started here in New York, I was reading Psalm 55 and David said morning, noon, and evening, we would cry out to you. We started a prayer meeting three times a day Monday through Friday. Monday through Friday: 6 am, 12 noon, and 6 pm. We prayed as a church for over a year and a half. And I mean the growth of the members praying five days a week plus Wednesday night Bible study and Sunday service.
<b>Participant G</b>	I believe they are doing good—not necessarily great, but good. We do have small groups; we do have bible study outside of Sunday morning. And time to time we will have like seminars that the members can come and grow through Christian education. They are very well versed in scriptures. They know what they believe and why they believe what they are living that out as I can see it. Not everyone, of course. The majority of them are attempting to live for Jesus daily and weekly, and they also have prayer ministry. Women have prayer ministry on Saturday mornings. It is a time of prayer but it is also a time of discipleship because they are learning how to pray. And that might be a significant amount of women on that call. And they look forward to it every week. We have suspended it for a season or two and they were crying about it, and now we have it back. They look forward to prayer and learning how to pray and be effective in prayers. But I would say that the Christian education they are learning, applying, they show up with notebooks. We—usually, when we do seminars and different things, we have a workbook where they can work through stuff. We use one a curriculum where we just go through scriptures: who is this God that we serve – everything from trinity to triune God, as well as the person and work of Jesus, the person and work of the Holy Spirit, understanding the creation,

	the fall, redemption, how to study the scriptures, how to pray, the character of God. They are very hungry very eager to learn and to apply. And they are actually doing that. You talk to them, about different things they will not necessarily give you a scripture but they will give you the application of the scripture.
<b>Participant H</b>	I would say that fifty percent of them are doing well, but the other fifty percent, I can lead them to the water, but I can't make them drink it.

<b>Question 7. How would you describe the overall spiritual and mental health of the congregants?</b>	
<b>Participant A</b>	The overall health of the congregation is sound, level, and grounded in the word of God. I believe in being sober, mature, and grounded in the word of God.
<b>Participant B</b>	<p>Spiritually they get what they need from the ministry to prosper in the things of God but appropriating what they receive is another matter. The unadulterated word of God is given each week and affirmed by less than half of the congregants. We hear their response to that through their testimonies which are shared shortly after the word is given. Most churches don't do this, but because we have a strong teaching ministry and we are small enough, we encourage the hearers to be more than just hearers but to testify about the word they just heard in a service. These same ones who testify each week, are prone to appropriate the word in their day-to-day lives and fruit is seen through their involvement in the ministry and in their personal lives. For this third to half, who are mostly adults and a few younger congregants, their spiritual lives show the fruit that the word says we ought to show: love, joy, peace, longsuffering and more. Praise our God, that's a good thing.</p> <p>But the spiritual health of the silent majority remains doubtful. Why? A part of this silent group is involved in the ministry but show slower growth from the word they hear, the bible study they might attend and/or the prayer groups they may participate in. I like to see growth because it shows they are alive and responding to what is going on. The larger portion of this group, which is over half, remains silent and shows little to no growth in their lack of testimony, low participation in worship, lack of participation in any aspect of the ministry other than paying their tithes. They are not dead, just stunted, due, I believe, to disobedience and unbelief.</p> <p>Mentally most of the congregants seem to be alert, able to process what they hear, and aware of what is required of them. For those who aren't, which I would estimate to be about half of our congregants, they don't grow in their walk because of wrong thinking. They have a "give-me mentality" that affects how they process the word they hear. It has left many who don't grow with a stubbornness and a hidden resistance to allowing God's word to change how they think. So mentally they don't grow as they ought to and so the cares of this world cloud their thinking which affects their spiritual health as well.</p>

	<p>I find that the congregants who are mentally healthy are the ones who are not afraid of the change that God's word will bring to their lives, and they look to understand more of how it will affect them for the good. We have a few congregants who have higher education, and while that education is no guarantee they are mentally healthy, they are alert and aware and know that more is required of them and are positioning themselves to do more. We have others who are not, and because they sometimes feel inadequate, put on a front that they will do, when secretly they will not.</p> <p>We have a mentorship program (that is being rebooted) and some congregants were asked to participate as mentors, and they were assigned young people to mentor. Participation had waned to only a few because they were ill-equipped to minister to others because they still needed to renew their minds to flow in love with the brethren. I believe willingness is a state of the heart and the mind. Some were willing, but when they found out what was required, refused to commit to doing the work, and instead of being truthful about their unwillingness, continued under the presumption that they were doing something, when they were doing nothing at all. Eventually, all of what they did or didn't do, came to light and we had to revamp the program.</p>
<b>Participant C</b>	<p>I am in a unique environment where every community where you are is unique. And the community here is seventy percent in poverty. And amongst the African Americans—they only represent ten percent of the community—there has been a great deal of abuse. There has been a great deal of drug use. There has been a lot of incest. There has been a lot of just breakdown in terms of the family structure and order. So, all of those affect the congregants because they are products of the community. And so, when you are financially struggling and you are struggling with your family, those things are present. What we try to do is set an atmosphere of worship and the word to help heal spiritual and mental states – to encourage. In one season of the ministry, we partnered with a counselor who volunteered her time. She is a graduate of Oral Roberts University, and she had a counseling ministry, and she came and she partnered with the church and met with family units and counselled moms, single moms and worked with the kids. But it was for a season, I think she was here for 3 or 4 years, but then her husband lost his job, and she then had to take on more responsibility with another job that did not allow her to be here. I feel personally, one of the weaknesses of the church is helping people with their mental issues that help with their spiritual issues is-counseling cost. And when you are in poverty and don't have the money, you don't have access to the counseling. And so, a community in poverty dealing with those issues don't always have the professional counseling that they need to overcome some of those issues. I pray over that all the time and am often looking for counselors who would be willing to volunteer time, but it is not easy to find that, not easy to find that. So many congregants are overcoming in that area. I noticed, Samuel, they are trying to walk with God, do what they need to do, but when the finances are not there, or if they are going through a crisis, it derails their spiritual</p>

	<p>focus. We try to teach them how to try to maintain as a way of protecting their mind. Keeping their mind on the Lord will keep you in perfect peace while you are going through. Sometimes there is an abandonment of the things they need to help them. We are trying to teach that to help navigate them through those situations. I do have a lot of people who have various issues to overcome while they try to walk out their faith.</p>
<b>Participant D</b>	<p>Overall, I believe the church is doing well. And they are doing well enough that I have reached out to a community organization to allow the church to be used as a satellite site to provide support community support. Just a place where people can go and talk, just for a listening ear, and then we serve as a point facilitating them to go to Winthrop Hospital, or go to Family and Children Services for the additional help. We have reached out to become part of those services. I guess individuals and programs are getting money from the ARP money from Biden and the American Rescue plan money, and so they are looking for people, but rather than just looking for people I am saying, let's find satellites sites. Because people would rather go to places that they are more familiar with. And I think that they would be more apt to go to a church or something that is going to be constantly be there rather than to go to a hospital location.</p>
<b>Participant E</b>	<p>I would say that overall spiritual growth is good. But I feel that our emotional health is not good. I have a couple in our church who feel that someone is after her husband. She saw the person talking to her husband and it blew up for three years because she thought that I should have sat these two people down and I should have been more involved. The young lady was asking her husband some questions because her husband had a stroke and the young lady, and her husband were friends. I felt that it was a personal thing between a husband and wife, and I was not going to get involved. She said that she could not follow my leadership and she left the church. That is why I feel that we are not emotionally healthy, and things have gone on in our lives that we are not emotionally healed from – even in our childhood. A lot of things that we do was according to how we were brought up. And sadly, to say they were not all good. That is the way our parents brought us up—the best way they knew how—and it has carried on. So, I think that we need more emotional healing or emotional health teaching in the church. Because when we are not emotionally healthy, our view of God is even different. It affects our view of God.</p>
<b>Participant F</b>	<p>I would describe the mental health, the emotional health, as quite stable overall. We have been teaching, and we have been preparing the congregation on emotional healthy spirituality. Peter Scazzero's teaching on emotional healthy spirituality, discipleship, and leadership. I embrace that entire aspect of attempting to develop an emotionally stable believer. So, I would say pretty stable.</p>
<b>Participant G</b>	<p>The overall spiritual and mental health of the congregants I would say is pretty good. We do have a few as I said, we do have a few who are challenged mentally. I said we have a few who are challenged mentally. They are in therapy now. I don't know necessarily know what exactly they</p>

	<p>are talking about. But they would check in with my wife and I to say, “I am doing good”, or “I am not having a great day”. But overall people tend to say that prayer ministry has been good to them and good I am not having a day, but overall people tend to say, especially the women, that prayer ministry has been good to them. When the men meet together, they express what is going on in their lives – their stress or whatever. But they have been in a good spot. We usually do men and women in different small groups. Sometimes we do it together where we are thinking about manhood and womanhood, and our particular role and responsibilities. It is just a place where they can express. So, they have expressed in both the women and the men’s group how they are doing well. They tend to have the help that they need. Spiritually they seem to be full of joy despite circumstance. Some of them got COVID in the midst of this pandemic and they had a really positive attitude about it. They did not complain. The church gave towards them. We were looking for ways to give them food, but they said, “We are good”. The church overall was excited about serving God and serving each other.</p>
<b>Participant H</b>	<p>I would describe them, overall, I have to look at the majority right now pretty much as babes in Christ. I don’t know if that is a good enough description for you. They need more maturity in their Christian walk. I would say that seventy percent of them lack academic prowess: the ability to read scripture and then comprehend and apply. It causes me to teach a certain way. I would say that twenty percent of them are at poverty financially and economic sense. And at a spiritual sense: seven percent.</p>

<b>Question 8. How would you describe the overall spiritual and mental health of the leaders?</b>	
<b>Participant A</b>	<p>The overall health of the leaders is acceptable. I don’t want to take the approach that I am having an expectation of the leaders to be a certain way. However, I do want to challenge them and see growth in their work in the ministry.</p>
<b>Participant B</b>	<p>I take that to mean the two pastors, the elders, the deacons and the teachers. Overall, I believe they position themselves to grow in God. They aren’t all growing at the same rate, but they are growing. The pastors position and reposition themselves to be effective servants for the Lord. The elders and deacons fluctuate in their spiritual health. They say one thing but when called upon to act, are often at a loss or do something that shows they aren’t in the position to be effective.</p> <p>Case in point, recently when I called upon our intercessors to pray for their pastors. (This group just so happens to be made up of most of our elders and deacons). While they should be praying for leadership on a regular basis, when I called upon them to pray, they were confused. I gave them what to pray for and they claimed to understand, but they stood together and didn’t know how to proceed. One prayed but it went nowhere. They got their footing when a more mature member of the group, stepped in and by the spirit of God, not her own volition, knew exactly what to pray for and</p>

	<p>against and heaven opened. When she finished, the rest were still hesitant and eventually realized one more could pray and be done.</p> <p>Mentally, they are coherent and on course to renew their minds with the word, but a few still battle with obedience to the word and the flow of the Spirit in the service. Case in point, one elder brings his comfort dog to service thinking it won't cause any harm because it's a small dog and has become an appendage to their family. But a church service is no place to bring pets, even well-behaved ones, because they become a stumbling block to the carnal minded and a reproach to the place where believers come to worship the King of Kings. Wrong thinking keeps him from seeing how his misguided actions affect the walk of others and his own effectiveness in doing what he is called upon to do for the service. We are a small church, but wrong thinking by even one person in leadership can impede the flow of the Spirit here as well.</p>
<b>Participant C</b>	<p>Exhausted. I rarely have to remind my leaders to take their sabbaths, to take their day of rest. And I pastorally try to discern when I see them exhausted and tried to decrease their workload or postpone a service to do something that will empower them to have some rest. Ministry, if full of work, is endless. Three funerals these past couple of weeks. And you got to do—the leaders are coming together to make sure we have food for the people. We got this; we got that; we got to do this; we got to do that. Then you have the meetings, then you have with the pastor, then they are doing all—they are keeping up with the finances and with the bookkeeping, and then—so, it is a lot. And, when you are a small church and you don't have a large staff, and they are all volunteers, and they work full-time jobs. So, these leaders, after they leave work, are engaging the ministry, coupled with their regular jobs. So, it requires that the pastor is sensitive to that. I might not have been as sensitive when I was younger, but with wisdom and with time I realized, you got to give them a break. And try to create some recreational things that allow us to go and play. We haven't been able to do that during COVID, but you have to be thinking of ways to help the pastor as a leader along with your staff: How to not hurt ourselves. Cause, you can hurt yourself, you can hurt yourself in ministry because the demand is high, and the workload is heavy, the needs are great and you have to learn how to not be controlled by all of that and how to balance it, so that you are preserved. I do not want any of my leaders to become victims in their health or in their families due to the overworking that comes with ministry. So, those leaders who are married, I authorized them to disengage once or twice a week from Bible study, because some of their spouses are not in church. So, I need them to spend time with your husband, spend time with your husband. I don't need him to be mad at the pastor or at the church. Is that answering your question? (Yes it is.).</p>
<b>Participant D</b>	<p>Well, so far in all of us—and if you noticed the echo so far, I was just talking to my husband about this today—I think that we are doing well, but one of the things that we have realized is that we are so busy pushing self-care for everyone else that we forget to do self-care for ourselves. So, right now, I am</p>

	<p>talking to you from Georgia. And I have come down—God had blessed me with being able to build a house here ten years ago. And I was so rarely coming down—I call it the Eagle’s Nest. It was supposed to be my place for refuge, rest, and restoration, and I opened it up to any pastor who wanted to come down for rest and restoration. I actually had made up my mind that I was going to sell it because I never get a chance to come down here. This is a seven-bedroom/five-bathroom house. And I never get a chance to come down here. So, I was going to sell it to a young man who grew up in our church with my children. He just finished a career in the military and retired. And I was coming down here just to do a closing. And right before—I was coming down on a Tuesday, that Friday all his paperwork for his prequalification fell through. Everything fell through; so, I say I am coming down there, anyway. I have not been in the house for a year and a half. I have not been there for long, let me just go for some self-care. I walk through the door and everything in this house just screamed, “Mama you are home. Welcome home”. I can hear the Holy Spirit so clearly saying, “This is the blessing that God has given to you. You need to take the time to rest in it”. And so, I reached out to him and said. “Listen, I can’t sell this house, I just can’t. I have to use this for self-care”. And the blessing of it is they opened up the sub-division where they are building fifteen more houses, and I said, “If you like the location, if you like the design of the house, once you get your paper work straight, they are building other houses, they are going to be smaller than this monstrosity. They will be smaller than this and you can still get your life going”. He is in a good place; I am in a good place; so, I have been down here for ten days. And I said that I am going to have to make a concerted effort for self-care, and I did get Bishop Bivens—I got him to come down before; he loved it. And I said, “Yes, God gave this to us”. We have to take the time, not to tell others to take care of themselves, but we have to take the time for self-care.</p>
<b>Participant E</b>	<p>I think our leaders, they are healthy. Spiritual they are healthy. I would say that there is always room for improvement. So, yeah I feel that overall, they are healthy. But I also found that when you have to put people in leadership and you think that you are doing the right thing, I think some people are in the wrong seat. And I think that when you are in the wrong seat, you can’t function well. So, I will have to remove some people and put them in the right seat. When some people are in the wrong seat, then you have to move them and put them in the right seat.</p>
<b>Participant F</b>	<p>As I said, one of the challenges that I said, leaders are often very spiritual, but not necessarily emotionally balanced. So, this challenge of being able to develop leadership that is based on emotionally healthy stability. Well I would say it depends on the days, times and situations, having good days, having bad days. I directed a drug treatment facility of one hundred clients and thirty staff members while pastoring. So, if you are talking about just the church because to be quite honest with you, I believe that one of the real</p>

	challenges of pastoring a small church is your time is divided between the spirituality and just kind of making a living.
<b>Participant G</b>	I say that a few leaders are burnt out—not from ministry, but dealing with the pandemic. One lost his job, and he is trying to start his own business. He is at Liberty getting his degree. He and his wife seem to be having some challenges. He is probably the one who is burnt out, and we do have another lady who seems to be overwhelmed with responsibilities, not at the church per se, but with life. When you go and say, “Hey, why don’t you just focus on personal things and they would be quick”. She would say, “No, no”. But I am not trying to hold her back, I am trying to give her some space. That is a couple of them. Again, dealing with the pandemic has been really challenging for some of our leaders. Not that it has not been challenging for anyone else. I am very mindful of their time. Our church is probably laid back more than it should be because I don’t put pressure on people to show up. I don’t put pressure on the leaders—you have to do this, you have to do that. But I think that if they were to go to some other churches that I used to be a part of they would probably not be walking with God right now. They cannot handle this amount of pressure at this level. I think it is because most of the people in leadership have children under ten years old. I think that most of the leaders have children under ten including myself (except for the children’s director). Navigating that and also navigating through the culture of the world pushing pride month, pushing same sex stuff, and trying to navigate and deal with their own kids, and I think that is where the mental health may be challenging and the spiritual. But this is just really trying to navigate through that as well as, I have a sense of calling to leadership and learning how to balance and be effective in all realms.
<b>Participant H</b>	I would say—I use a scale like: poor, good, excellent, outstanding – I would say excellent.

**Question 9. Tell me about your work experiences at this institution.**

<b>Participant A</b>	My work experience is mainly administrative in tasking. There is some financial teaching I provide to have a congregation that knows the importance of being good stewards and financially sound in their giving from a biblical perspective.
<b>Participant B</b>	I do it because I love the LORD and obey his directive to worship Him as well his directive to feed his sheep. It’s been doable but at former times it was difficult to manage. The size of the congregation lends itself to what the head pastor and I can handle with our families and full-time jobs. While we don’t operate on a 9 to 5 workday schedule, congregants fortunately don’t give us many distress calls. I think having formed men and women fellowships has helped most congregants reach out and pray things through with each other.

	<p>Preparing for worship service and the actual service are my biggest jobs. Even the word takes second to that and can be a major pull because I only bring the word directly once a month, in addition to leading worship, and playing keyboard at every service. If I don't fully depend on the LORD, I feel like a one-man band. God always supplies but standing under the mantle to funnel the supply doesn't get easier with age. It's just doable.</p> <p>I am the sole resident musician as well. That took a while to learn to handle, but I have no backup, so that used to be a tremendous burden for me, but I learned to stand up under it. God shows up, sometimes tremendously, on Sundays and all is right in the world. The preparation for worship service gets minor push back at home because of our shared living space with my wife and three sons and limited time alone to worship, while dealing with occasional family drama.</p> <p>Not having a worship team hasn't been as difficult as I thought it would be, but it does make a difference when you have others hungry for the Lord working with you. I lost my team a few years ago. Rehearsals weren't conducive to everyone's schedule and people's levels of maturity in the LORD showed through enough to interfere with ministering. Honestly, it's been a press to have to go it alone for so long. I sometimes fight off feeling helpless to reach even my own children at times with the importance of worship but have persevered anyway because I have to allow space and time for God to move and for them to respond to him.</p> <p>Many congregants seem clueless on how to worship, even though we walk through how to week after week, month after month, year after year. I have an AME/Baptist/Pentecostal background and miss the exuberant worship I grew up in God with. I have had to modify delivery to congregants with a more formal (subdued) worship background. Still God always shows up, so I remain hopeful that the people will desire more one day.</p> <p>I am concerned that we have no influx of seekers and while I can occasionally step in for the senior pastor with the word, which is still a heavy responsibility for me as the associate pastor, along with handling finances and a stressful 9to5 job, playing keyboard and leading praise and worship every Sunday, there's no one in the wings waiting to be groomed for the job.</p>
<b>Participant C</b>	<p>When you got your normal preaching, teaching, discipling responsibilities, funerals, weddings, administering, giving guidance and direction in the midst of crises with congregants with leaders, managing—there is a lot of involvement with the community—the community involvement. I am a part of the Ministerial Alliance. I serve as an officer in various capacities as Treasurer, as the President, I have just been reelected President again. So, there is a jack of all trades—as a small pastor, when my family comes, they say everybody in the town knows you. The police calls—I get phone calls from the police authorizing people to stay at the hotel if they are stranded in town. We have a program for that. And oh my—Pastor Parker can you give me a ride to Walmart. So, there is the taxi component to it. Giving rides, sometimes stranded people come here and I will get somebody and we will drive them to the next town since there are greater resources in terms of the</p>

	<p>Salvation Army. It is a very comprehensive thing, a pastor's job, especially in a small church when you give yourself to it full-time like I have. It is a very comprehensive task managing all those responsibilities. Out of all the churches in Bristow that are small like myself, I am the only pastor that is full-time who has submitted to the income that the church can pay me. All the other pastors work full-time jobs. And so, their ability to give to the community is not in the say way as I do as a small pastor. So, there is a component with most small churches that the pastor is sustained by a full-time job and then he is limited to what he can put into the church to a certain degree because he is putting in forty hours. I made a decision to submit to what the church pays me and to live by faith and to give myself to the ministry for the people and/or the community these past twenty-four years.</p>
<b>Participant D</b>	<p>Well, you know, as I said I am the founder of the church, so it started in my living room and I have just seen how God has provided as we were like nomads moving from place to place. Every place that we end up going to, God spiritually opened the door, and there were years where I have seen it where people would not even take money from us just to support the ministry. As a matter of fact, we were going to build a house; I mean a house of worship from the ground up, sent the money in for a prefab building, and the plans got lost at the plant. In the meantime, I went to a prayer meeting—we started worshipping outside on the grounds that it was supposed to be built on. And when the fall came, and I said to God we have to prepare to move the people indoors, and they still can't find our plans. And this was a well-known, well-established organization. And they could not understand why they could not find our plans. And anyway, the Lord said to go to Hempstead, where we are right now. And we did go to where God told us to go. And then God said this is where you are going to be. And I said Lord, "I just spent six years and seventy-five thousand dollars getting this building". God said, "This is where you are to be". So, we went to this building, and the building was in such bad shape that contractors were telling us to walk away from it, but I said, "I can't. This is where God told us to go". When I reached out to the company, they said, "Good news; we found all your plans. We already started working on your project; your kit is sealed, and the foundation will start going down in October". I said, "Well, too late. God is telling us that we have to go somewhere else". That gentleman, I never met him to this day. I have never met him. He said to me, "Pastor, if you tell me that God told you to walk away from this, I believe you. And I am going to make sure we give you every dime of your money back". They did not penalize us even though they started on the project. They have given it all back, and we have seen that over and over again. Where God guides, He provides. And over and over I mean testimony after testimony that building is like four times what we were going to build. And we owe nothing on the building. The building has been debt-free. Since the day we closed on that building, it has been debt-free. When we had it—when we did have it appraised, it was appraised at two million dollars. We ended up paying one million for it, and it is debt-free. And we are a small church and we have</p>

	only done what God told us to do: tithes and offering. We did not sell no fish sandwiches; we did not rape the sheep. We did what God told us to do, and we just got the assessment for the building from the town, and the building is now assessed at \$4.5 million.
<b>Participant E</b>	Well, I started working in the church when I was sixteen at my old church, Zion Baptist Church. I started working as a Sunday School Teacher, and then as a superintendent. And I worked as a trustee, (on) the board of trustees. But at this church I work in the Women's ministry, also as the Administrator, and Associate Pastor, but now I am the Senior Pastor. And I feel that I have worked in almost every department except Ushering.
<b>Participant F</b>	Well, my background has been in psychology and sociology in college. I was involved with a school in Brooklyn called Community Bible Institute. So, for about fifteen years I was an Associate Pastor of a church in Manhattan called Living Word Christian Center, and from Living Word, we started Sword of the Spirit. I have not attained a degree from Bible College, so, my experience has been: I have taken classes, a lot of self-taught.
<b>Participant G</b>	I have been—when I first became senior pastor, I was still apart of another church. I had been with the other church for about ten years as youth pastor full time. I navigated between both churches. I was at my current church for about a year and a half while dealing with the vision of another church which made it pretty difficult to build. So, I left the church my income was coming from. I left that to come to a church where they were not at a place to give me anything. So, I went through a season where I volunteered for many, many, many, many years. I just became full-time this year in February. But it is not like anything has changed financially. I do not get anything from the church. Financially, I get everything that I get from partners, friends and family members who are partners with the church, who give specifically for the purpose of me being fulltime—if that makes sense. So, my salary, that I receive now, that I received for many years, let's say ten years. We have partners that give on a regular basis every month, weekly, yearly, for the purpose of me being fulltime. And so, for this year in February, I was fulltime where I am able to give myself over to the vision. So, working at the church, most of the years, I have volunteered. So, this year now, I am receiving a salary. Our partnership has increased therefore it gives me the ability to give myself freely over to the church.
<b>Participant H</b>	My work experience at the church: I was the minister of music; I was a janitor; I was the chief financial officer; I was a teacher, associate pastor, senior pastor, kitchen staff, and all others.

**Question 10. From your experience, how do you handle a crisis?**

<b>Participant A</b>	How do I handle a crisis? When a crisis takes place, I began with prayer. I have to consult God to deal with the issue at hand. I also designed a room called: The Situation Room. It is here where all issues are laid out on the table to address, discuss, and have candid conversations to help reach a solution.
<b>Participant B</b>	<p>I have to assess that there actually IS a crisis. I have found it's usually been better to wait to respond instead of reacting to every issue that pops up. I pray for his guidance and then I go for a walk if I need to. I get away from everyone to be quiet and allow God to speak to me. Even if I would personally want to address the issue.</p> <p>If it's a verbal attack, I've learned to not take it personally but realize it's the congregant's situation, attitude or issue that may need to be addressed. If they want to leave, or they feel wronged, I minister to them to prepare to do what they believe is right after they seek the LORD.</p> <p>We had one instance where a family member of a congregant (and a few congregants) took offense at my reference to untrained young women as wild heifers implying that they didn't want to apply themselves and just ran around playing in the field without a care. But they took it to mean I was name calling young women and referring to them as fat lazy women who sat around overeating, or some other negative slang reference attached to the heifer reference. They egged on other congregants to become incensed. I apologized publicly for the misunderstanding the next Sunday, but I realized their taken offense had more to do with their walk than a mistaken reference. And in spite of my apology, they remained offended.</p> <p>After a crisis, I usually notify the senior pastor of what is happening or for advice on where to take things. Either way, he is always made aware of the goings-on and what action I took.</p>
<b>Participant C</b>	And we have had many crises and the first thing that I would do is pray. I also have a pastor. I also always have someone over me to whom I am accountable. And I would also always seek council. So, I seek council. If we are in the midst of crises, I seek council. I have the privilege of meeting with that pastor and all of the pastors who are submitted to him on a monthly basis. So, I am not only connected to the one who I am mostly accountable to, but the relationship with the other pastors. I get to call them as well. I vent. You have to vent, so you have to vent. So, there are certain pastors I can call and vent with and express my frustrations with. And not feel—they are going to judge me; they know that I am called of God. There is a support system, so prayer, council, I think those are the main ways—venting.
<b>Participant D</b>	Be still and know... You know. I do mean that seriously. I just don't mean that just because the scripture says, "God says be still and know that I am God". You have to be still. As a matter of fact, in addition to being a pastor of a small church, I was a sitting principal on 9/11. My school was right on the other side of the Brooklyn Bridge. We watched the building—our school is located in a place where we saw the planes hit the towers and even in that you had to be still. God has given—there is a grace covering that comes with those pastors that are called—not the ones that came running. I am talking

	<p>about the ones who are called—God gives that “grace covering”. When He has called you to do something, He equips you with everything that you need with to go through whatever He has attached to that assignment. So, I can tell you there is a grace covering. I was so deadly calm during that day; it has amazed me. I’ve become—there are time I had to do funerals for people’s babies. Individuals that just suffered so much. I can’t even begin to tell you. But God has given us some hard assignments but with those assignments, but with those assignment have come the grace covering to lead his people through. And I remember that right after 9/11, we had to get all of the kids out of the building safely. We had parents coming in all panicking. We were able to deal with them at the door to keep it from coming in the building. And on that day, they did not end school earlier—that is the New York city public school; they never closed and they never ended earlier. We were able to get everybody out of the building, everybody home safely. Even though the bus and the trains all stopped running that day. Even though there were no cell phones. We still got everybody where they were supposed to go. But it wasn’t until the kids came back and the Board had us do a fire drill. And when we did a fire drill, everybody took it seriously. And it wasn’t until we got back into the building that was the first time I felt the weight of the responsibility. Because it was over a thousand kids and one thousand adults in that building. And that is the same weight you carry into a church. Whether you have twenty members or a thousand members, one hundred members, that is that weight of responsibility. You are not there (just) to lead them in worship, you are responsible for their very lives. You know? Yeah.</p>
<b>Participant E</b>	<p>It all depends on what kind of crisis. Just a spiritual crisis, I would counsel them on the Word of God. The main crisis that I have dealt with is when people are sick. And all that they want to hear is: “I am going to get well” or “their loved one is going to get well.” But when the person expires, you feel bad about it, and they feel bad about it. It makes them look at God in a different way. But, I always counsel them from what the word of God says. I can only give you what the word of God says. You can only receive it or don’t receive it.</p> <p>I had a personal crisis when my ex-husband divorced me. That whole situation was a crisis, and for the longest, at least a year, I could not... when I walked into the church, people would not speak to me. So after, I asked them,” What? Why didn’t you speak to me?” And they said, “Because we were hurting also, and because we were hurting, we didn’t know what to say to you.” I am so thankful that I was introduced to Vanessa, a counselor, and she walked me through the pain; and if it was not for Vanessa and the Lord, I would have lost my mind. It was devastating. That was a crisis with me. I withdrew. And every time I walked into the church I would cry. This went on every Sunday; I would be crying. But one day, I said to God, “This is the last day I am going to cry over this situation. It is behind me, and it is done.” I was set free that day, and you know what? I have not cried over that situation since, and that has been over seventeen years. I am free from it—</p>

	<p>so free that I don't even think about my ex-husband. And I said to God, "That is not right. I have a daughter with him, but, I do not even think about him." But one of the church's former members died and they asked him [my ex-husband] to minister at the funeral. He did not show up because the car that they sent him left—he was not downstairs when the car showed up, and they did not wait for him. Then they called me, and I am thinking, "What are you all calling me for? I don't know." I got about four phone calls from them, and I wanted to know why (they) were calling me. They should be calling his wife. Anything they want to know about my ex-husband, they call me. That bothers me, but I am polite. I would tell them, "You should call his daughter; she would be able to tell you more about her father." But you know, we don't even talk about him. Sometimes, I think that something may be wrong with my daughter; she don't even talk about her father. There are times she would say to me that she is going to spend the day with (her) father, or "I am going to church today with my father". But to sit down and talk, he does not come up in our conversation.</p> <p>A crisis that I am dealing with right now is I have a very sick sister who has cancer. And with my family, we try to protect people because we would say that we are okay. Like she will be in the hospital getting blood and she would say that she is getting stronger every day. That is something that I am dealing with in this particular moment, and I am just asking God to give me strength because everybody in my family is looking to me for answers. They are looking to me to be strong for them. I can't be weak, because I don't have nobody to fall on but God. They would call me and ask me, "How is she doing? Have you heard from her today?" I would think, "She has a phone. Why don't you call her and find out?"</p>
<b>Participant F</b>	<p>Well, I mean, Scripture says having done all that the crisis demands. I mean we want to look at the crisis. Well crisis with a member, well as I said, you know, I mean, I believe that effective communication is the key to everything, so you know you want to be able to communicate in an effective matter to just really ascertain what the issues are. And if there are resources that we can make available, if there are—because of my background being part of a clinical team, I kind of look at things from a clinical perspective and problem solve. If a problem arises, I look within the team: if there are people who have resources, if there are people who have insight into things, if there are things that I am not keen on or knowledgeable on, I will try to find someone who is, and try to bring expertise from that place.</p>
<b>Participant G</b>	<p>First thing I do I spend some time praying, praying in other tongues, seeking the Lord for wisdom and guidance. But before I go and make a decision and respond out of emotions or out of the flesh, I spend time in prayer. It may be an hour or two. It depends on how crucial or how bad is the crisis. Thinking, if I have some time, I will spend that time, if I don't have that time, at least, I will take that time to pray even if it is fifteen or twenty minutes before I respond. Then I will assess the situation trying to look at all sides of it, and within the leadership of the church, I will bring it before our elders or</p>

	ministers—bouncing things off of them. We may call an emergency meeting. And if it seems to be too challenging within my scope of leadership and the people I serve along with. I will reach out to mentors and spiritual leaders of my wife and I personally, and I will reach out and talk and pick their brains and ask for their wisdom and their guidance when it comes to that particular crisis. I will reach out to about two of them. I have at least ten people that I can reach out to and pull on them. I do not go to all ten of them. When you start going to three and four people, “What do you think? What do you think?” You still have to hear from God, and when you have three or four different thoughts, I will be confused after I walk away from all of them. I usually pray and ask God who should I go to.
<b>Participant H</b>	I am pretty level-headed. I am not one to panic. It is all because of my trust and my faith. So, I go in with a level head because if I am in a panicky mode, I can’t think straight. That is typically how I go at a crisis.

**Question 11. Could you describe the success of the institution over the past five years?**

<b>Participant A</b>	The ministry has had a very successful run. In the past five years: Growth of the ministry with new disciples. A mortgage-free ministry. On task to be a debt-free ministry with all credit card debts wiped clean. I have a slogan, train, equip and empower. This has really blossomed especially during the pandemic. The leaders have grown in their spirituality and it's noted in their character and personality.
<b>Participant B</b>	Financially, we are sound. We are a tithe paying ministry and we support a sister ministry in India and have been most of the time we’ve been in existence. I think those are the two biggest successes. We are a congregation under fifty people, where most of the adults and young people with jobs, tithe. Over the past five years, we have continued uninterrupted support of a mission ministry in India. We’ve helped them pay for schooling, buy land, build a Christian academy and provide food and shelter for their ministers to continue missionary work in other parts of India including along the border of China. We provided life giving funds during the last eighteen-month COVID epidemic.
<b>Participant C</b>	I would say that our greatest success is that we are still open. We are still open; we have not shut the doors. I would say the greatest challenge in ministry in twenty-four years has probably been the last five years. Cause I have had to lose quality people. Many of which have passed on due to death. Some have relocated to other cities and states, and when you lose quality people, that affects the house. Our musician that we have raised up from a teenager to play our music has relocated to Atlanta, Georgia, and we haven’t been able to find a musician since then. So, we are struggling a little bit in that area. I don’t know how to play, but I would get on and pretend like I do. I would get on and create some form of worship. The budget is not of such where we can afford some of the musicians who we have found. They want

	<p>to charge \$200 a week, \$300 a week. We are not there yet financially. And with losing people through relocation, you also lose income to the church. So, the past five years have not been so easy, but we are still standing; we are still preaching; we are still ministering; we are still touching lives; we are still engaging the community. We are keeping the faith. You mentioned—if I can go back to one of your questions. It asked what was prosperous. Somehow or another, through the past year, through COVID our finances have been the strongest. It has been more stable during the pandemic than it was anytime—all the twenty-four years. The year of the pandemic was the most stable year financially to the church. And our outreach increased because it forced me onto Facebook. And we went from me ministering to thirty, forty people to ministering to three to four hundred that are being reached through Facebook. So, the pandemic led to increasing the word and the outreach through Facebook live. And somehow or another the finances have been—over the past twenty-four years every year, I have suffered not getting paid certain periods of time, but I was paid the whole year of 2020 and 2021 thus far. Since COVID—praise Him; hallelujah, in Jesus name. And that is not a lot—I am not getting paid a lot, but that creates a peace of mind knowing that you can pay your bills.</p>
<b>Participant D</b>	<p>As I say, there is an apostolic call on my life. And so, to me, an apostle—and a church that carries an apostolic calling—is able to trust and move people and things forward. So, I thank God that as I look at the leadership that is going forward, I look at the fact that there are a number of people that through their relationship with the church and through myself, have come looking for jobs and found careers. There are a number of people who have come—that were in other careers and found new careers and are successful where they have been counseled and mentored into. And they are doing extremely well. There are a number of them in other areas of the country—as a matter of fact, during women’s month, we had an altar call of service where we did not have one sister who was—that was preaching that day; that wasn’t either a leader in their current church or a pastor that was in New York. Everybody was—one from Vegas, one from Virginia, one was from New Jersey; we had Baltimore; we had Texas. We had them that have now spread across this nation who are still in either pastoring or in a spiritual leadership position where they are. That was really good; that was really good; so, you see the growth that way.</p>
<b>Participant E</b>	<p>I would say that our success is our unity. Those who have been there for the last five years have grown spiritually; they have even grown in their finances. I have also seen their growth in their prayer life. I have seen some who did not want to pray in public. Now you ask them to pray and they don’t even want to stop. For the past year with COVID, our success—believe it or not—has been in the area of our finances, and I give my daughter credit for that because she put us on Push-pay. People can go in anytime and pay their tithe. Most of the people are paying their tithe electronically. Most people are saying to me that this is perfect. First of all, we are not in the church and I don’t have to mail it in; all I have to do is go</p>

	online and pay my tithe. We have seen such a growth that a couple of our people during this pandemic have purchased houses. So, I have seen the success in that area.
<b>Participant F</b>	Success in the last five years? I could look at what we just came through in the last year and a half. I have talked to several ministers whose churches did not make it through this because of members, and the church itself could not handle not being in a building. We have grown during this time. Our resources have grown membership has grown. As I said, we have been praying with each other for over a year and a half and to be quite honest with you, that is where we have seen the hand of God. My members have been spared, my members recovered, none of my members have passed. Many of our members have bought new homes and gotten new jobs and have prospered. We have seen testimonies of increase even during this time of famine.
<b>Participant G</b>	We have reached where a lot of churches are looking for younger people. We have been praying for older people because our church is full of millennials. Now millennials and men are drawn to our church. I am actually praying for women now, for women to come to our church. We don't have a lot of women, but I am asking for more women. Most churches that I know are full of women and older saints, middle aged. And most of my congregants are in their 20s, 30s, yeah in their 20s and 30s. So, I am seeking. I guess the success would be, we have the ability to draw men. And we have the ability to draw younger people. They are drawn to us, there is nothing that I am doing unique that I think that I am doing. I know that on Sundays, we try to get involved. I know we try to get involved in discipleship. We have the ability to help people grow spiritually. When people come to our church, when they leave, they will know the Lord better. They will know what they believe better; their faith will be strengthened. They will know how to witness; they will know how to pray for people. They will know how to be a faithful member. The success would be discipleship. The result is having more men at our church. Our membership is up.
<b>Participant H</b>	Very subjective, how would you describe success? I will define it from a spiritual standpoint as far as we were successful in staying focus on pleasing God. I would say we are very successful. If I can explain, my whole focus on teaching when I teach my folks, our focus should be on God and not how to appease each other. From that stand point, myself along with my leadership team, we are very successful in preaching that consistent message. If it means that we only have twenty people or fifty people, we are okay with that because what is most important is what is pleasing and acceptable in God sight. If I look at it from man's stand point as far as numbers then I may not be successful—if I look at it from their stand point—because we only have a small congregation.

**Question 12. From your experience, compared to similar institutions, how well is this one doing?**

<b>Participant A</b>	From looking at other ministries; we are doing exceptionally well. Good leadership, stewardship, prayer life, and heart towards God is important to maintain a successful ministry.
<b>Participant B</b>	I don't know of any with the same structural base, congregant size, teaching or worship ministry. Also, I haven't had a lot of extra time to go visit or fellowship with other ministries. I'm up to minister every Sunday unless I'm on vacation. I do remember the ones I came from which just happen to be larger ministries. I believe we are doing better financially and overall, than many, regardless of their size and the fellowship here is healthier.
<b>Participant C</b>	We are—I hate to use the word better, but we are better than some and worst than others. We are probably in the middle somewhere. Some people have less members than we do. Some people have more members than we do. Some have—I guess the greatest asset that we have as a church is that I am available as a pastor to the congregants and to the community all week long. Whereas the other churches, as I mentioned earlier, they do not have pastors that are available in that regard. So, as a Black pastor, my presence is in the community all week long. That is not true for the other Black pastors or even White pastors who have small churches. So, my presence is on par with the pastors of the larger churches who are getting a salary, who have been to college. That is another uniqueness to me that out of all the other small churches, I am the only one seminarian trained. None of the other pastors are. I am the only seminarian trained pastors amongst the small churches. And Bristow has a population about 4,800 to 4,900 people and we have about forty churches and thirty-five of those churches are all small churches. If you actually compare our large churches to the mega-churches, all the churches in Bristow are small churches. So, there are some smaller than others. There is not a mega-church in this city. But the larger churches would be those like one hundred fifty to two hundred fifty to three hundred people. And the smaller churches—we have a small church with seven or eight people; so, it could range from seven or eight to fifty, sixty, seventy to a hundred. I could be very specific and say in my community that there are seven, seven small churches pastored by Black pastors, none of us have a hundred members each. If you combine all our members of all the Black churches, from the Black churches that are small, we would probably have a hundred to a hundred twenty-five people with those seven churches. While I tried to encourage all the pastors to come together and start one church, there is a lot of ego which will not allow that to happen.
<b>Participant D</b>	I think in comparison to other church sizes, the number of people—I think we are doing extremely well. Is all—like I say—some are “called” and some “come running”. And so, when you say in comparison, I am looking at mixing the “called” and “come running,” together. But, the fact that I have seen people with larger congregations come in and I was really surprised like the size of the church, about the work of the food pantry, about the kind of outreach that we provide—even the training—they were kind of surprised why you were looking to do NCAA training for athletes. I say, “Because too many of our young male athletes do not know the differences between a D1,

	D2, or D3 schools, and they don't know what courses they are supposed to take so that they could get a good scholarship and not end up red-shirted". When you start talking to other pastors like that, they don't look for that kind of stuff. They have to understand that I think that our church does the overall reach out looking at the whole life of the individual, not just the spiritual life. So, in that aspect, I know that we are doing much better because we are looking to develop the whole person and not just the spiritual aspect of the person.
<b>Participant E</b>	Not good when it comes to getting new members. I see and I do not like to compare us to other places. I see from others it seems like they are getting new members, they are getting new people. I see why we are not getting new members. We are a loving church and everything, but I realized that they are getting new members because of what they are teaching. You see, our people have itching ears. And if you are teaching in our church—our church would be full if I am teaching the prosperity message, that everybody is going to get a car and everybody is going to get a house. But that is not the message that God has given me, and I have to stick to the message that (he) has given me. And the other one is, we don't have our own building; we have to share the place. We have an eight o'clock service and they are not fixing what needs to be fixed; and they are not allowing us to do too much. Now we cannot go back into the building unless they fix what needs to be fixed. Now we cannot go back into the building unless they say that we can. And they have to do some work before they can go back into the building. First of all, young people do not want to go to church at eight o'clock in the morning.
<b>Participant F</b>	I refuse to compare. I refuse to compete. I think that is the challenge of being able to be single focused, single-minded: that I am not making comparisons. Even Paul talked about it. Paul talked about not comparing us with ourselves. So, I really tried to live in that because outside of that there is a whole lot of frustration, personally, I mean.
<b>Participant G</b>	I would say that we are at a greater advantage. We have gained members in the midst of COVID. We have outgrown our current building; We were growing before COVID. But COVID has made us more visible online. We are doing better than churches our size. The giving has been great. The giving has tripled since COVID. We are growing. We are getting people giving. They are giving online. People we don't even know. And people are inquiring about membership.
<b>Participant H</b>	I think that we are doing very well with the folks that I have. We have a heart for God and a heart for people. And we seem to be very in sync with each other when it comes to doing ministry from that stand point. And I realize how blessed I am when I talk to other people.

**Question 13. How would you describe your emotional and mental state after dealing with challenges or conflicts?**

<b>Participant A</b>	I have learned to exercise patience dealing with people. There are all types of behaviors in a ministry. Never take issues personally. Be honest, open, and the people will gain trust and respect. My overall mental health is at a level I am pleased handling conflict.
<b>Participant B</b>	<p>Fortunately, there aren't too many challenges.</p> <p>Afterwards, it's a pull, so I feel drained but encouraged that God could fix the issue if I trust him and put the crisis in His hands and thank Him for helping me through it.</p> <p>When a member decided she needed to leave, I welcomed the idea but told her she should find a church where the whole bible was preached. I was confident she would hear what God was telling her wherever she went because we didn't own her, and she was under no constraint to stay with us. She was a babe and needed to be <i>some</i> place she could receive the word of God. She was grateful I advised her by the spirit of God and months later returned.</p>
<b>Participant C</b>	<p>When I was younger, I was overwhelmed. When I first started, I was really overwhelmed. And I had to seek counseling, and I had to get counseling, literally counselors. I unfortunately suffered a divorce while pastoring that was unreal and very much emotionally unstabling. I kind of felt myself in a kind of claustrophobic state, but praying—the Holy Spirit instructed me to seek counsel and come out of isolation. And in doing so, I got help. I just think the key for pastors is staying connected with others. Just staying connected with others venting and having a support system through other ministers, pastors, family members and friends. That becomes a significant source to your mental state, your spiritual state and well-being. That support system that surrounds you, people in your corner encouraging you, affirming you, praying with you checking on you. Ministry can be—there is a lot—'cause there is spiritual warfare associated with it 'cause you are dealing with people and you are dealing with life. God is faithful if we humble ourselves and allow God to use others to help us. He would help us and bring us through. Get a message every now and again. I am thinking again about beginning yoga.</p>
<b>Participant D</b>	<p>I can tell you that the Lord has equipped me with being a fighter—even a fighter against myself. You know, I stand on Isaiah 41:10 and God tells me not to fear. He is not only my God. He is going to strengthen me. He is going to help me, and He is going to uphold me. Do we have those moments where we feel really broken? Yes, we do have those moments. One thing God has taught me. He has taught me to relish those times and celebrate who he is as my way maker, and not depend on myself and you know, thoroughly depend on him. And I know it's a gift. It's the gift of faith, you know? And yeah, like coming down here—I needed this. I needed this and when I realized that I almost gave it away... I came down here to give it away. I mean, this house is six thousand square feet. I was going to leave seventy percent of the furniture here, so that he could have a good start. I mean I almost gave it away, and God said, "No, this is what I gave to you to help restore you and keep you in the place that you need to be". You know, I thank God that He</p>

	does that for me. He does that for me. And every pastor needs that self-care. We have to stop thinking that we are supermen, 'cause we are not.
<b>Participant E</b>	I feel fine. The only time I do feel a little - according to my personality, (is) sometimes when a person dies, and they are going through—this bothers me. I feel that my mental state is good. And one thing I know, I have to stay in the right relationship in the Lord because He is the only one—whatever I am going through—He can pull me through. And I can always find comfort in His words. So, I know that I have to stay in a right relationship with Him and totally depend upon Him to walk me through whatever I am going through.
<b>Participant F</b>	It depends. I do believe if you are going to be effective—we deal with real traumatic stuff, counseling someone, grief counseling. Walking through this entire period with COVID has been quite traumatic, so, I try to make an attempt to take heed to myself. I try to take care of myself. I believe in self-care more than anything else, more than ministry, of life, is that we must take care of ourselves. In fact, dealing with the crisis, the most important aspect of the crisis is self-care. And so, that has been my focus personally, Samuel. Just going through as we have aged as we continue in ministry to continually check up on how I am doing.
<b>Participant G</b>	It can be draining. And you know it is a time when you recognize that you need to regroup. When I recognize that, I take a sabbatical. I take a month off where I do not preach. The ministers are able to take over and they will run and facilitate the worship service and preach. And in a couple of years, I will take six months to a year off, 2023, I will take six months to a year off. I recognize that when I come to that place, I need to take some time off and regroup. This year I did three months and the church actually grew.
<b>Participant H</b>	How would I describe it? I would describe it today as healthy. But when I look back it was challenging, emotionally challenging. But I think over the years, God has definitely used those challenges to mature me to where I am at today. There is still room to grow. I can honestly look back and see the good, the bad, and the not so good. And okay I could have done that better, so, right now I am in a better place. Emotionally, I think I was a mess because again I was comparing myself against worldly standards and was becoming depressed over it because I was not doing this, doing that. But now, “let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, oh Lord”.

**Question 14. From your experience, how have these challenges affected your family relationship - negative or positive?**

<b>Participant A</b>	Overall the experience has been positive. My wife has stated she doesn't know how I deal with the people at times. A pastor must have a love and heart for people, period.
<b>Participant B</b>	The challenges haven't really affected my family because I keep them out of it (unless they are directly involved in the crisis).

	There was a learning curve starting a new ministry. I had to deal with preparation more than challenges in addition to handling my family's affairs.
<b>Participant C</b>	<p>I am a unique pastor in that I am single. And I see myself—this context reminds me of the mission field. And sometimes, I am grateful and thankful that I am single because of what a family would have to go through, for example. The submission to my income, for example, you know maybe \$2,400.00 a month. It didn't start out that way; it was \$800.00 a month for the first five years. And, it got raised to about \$2,400, and it has been that way. There have not been any more raises since that. I have been trusting the Lord, so if I was married and had kids, I see where that would be a challenge. From the mindset of a husband, you will be wanting to provide. It would probably shift my focus. I would probably give up the focus of the people and the ministry reaching the way that I am. And I would probably have to do something else that would empower me to provide for that family and create a situation where they were protected. So being single has been helpful in one regard to ministry in a missions context cause I feel like I am on the mission field in the context where I am doing ministry. My family, sometimes in Los Angeles, can be concerned about me. My mother, brothers and sisters, so I do contact them. I pray with my brothers and sisters every Tuesday, and I pray with my Mom and her siblings every Thursday. So that is connecting me with the family. It connects me; we talk, we share, we pray, so I have family connected with me, though we are out-of-state. We get online; we get on a conference call. So, twice a week I am connecting with family though we are far away. And we are talking scriptures; we are praying; we are interceding, and I am reassuring them I am okay—nothing for them to worry about—and their prayers, and support also help. There is no family with me in the whole state of Oklahoma.</p>
<b>Participant D</b>	<p>Well, let me tell you something; my daughter said something to me that I never considered. That being with the school, being with the church, I always had my kids with me. And even when we did outreach for the school kids or whatever, I always took them with me. As an adult, my daughter said to me, "Mom, we were always there, but we were not always with you. We always felt we had to share you". And I never saw it that way. I felt that as long as they were with me—as long as I took them on every trip—you know. I would not work for the D.O.E. during the summer because I felt that I was working so hard during the year. And even with my grandson, (my husband and I were his custodial parents, and he is incarcerated now), and I am saying, "Everything you could check off for a child, we did that". And so, when we asked him, "Why? What was it? What made you become the prodigal?" And one of the things that he said to us was, "When I was in middle school you were my principal. In the community, you were my pastor; and I wanted to be accepted by my peers in the community. So, I had to prove to them that I wasn't a softy". So, he ended up rebelling and going into the street and adopting the street life to prove that he wasn't a softy. So, in that aspect it has affected my grandson. And my daughter was the one that shared that information with me. And then, if you are a high achiever, the</p>

	<p>children tend to think that they are competing against this legacy that you guys have left, and I don't want to do that. You know, I don't want to do that. I don't want to do that. And then I let them know that I didn't want to do that either, that when God calls you, you just have to go. One of the things I say to the congregation, "I am very transparent: God is going to save my household. He promised to save my household, and on this side of the dirt, I am going to see them—you know, all of them"; we all pray; we all believe in God, but there is a level of commitment that they have all pulled back from because they have seen how hard it is. They have seen the level of work and the sacrifice that has to be given. So, I think that all three of them—even the grandson that is in jail, have pulled back from that level of leadership because they know true ministry is a great, great sacrifice. And they don't want it. They don't want to make that level of sacrifice.</p>
<b>Participant E</b>	<p>I think they have affected my relationship positively with my daughter. In the beginning when all of what happened with me and my husband, my daughter went and got married and did not tell anyone. Just two of her friends knew. He did not have and she didn't have a job. I knew that it was not going to last. Not even a year later, she called and says "Ma, I want to come home." I said, "Sure. You and Mike want to come home?" She said, "No, just me". So, when she came home, she said, "I am getting a divorce". So, I said, "Girl, that is the best thing that could have ever happened. I will give you the money to get this divorce." And she said to me, "Ma, when I got married, I did not tell you. I did not tell Dad. I did not tell nobody." She said, Now I want to get out of it. I am going to do it myself". She worked so hard that summer and got her divorce. To me, that was growth on her part. Now she helps me in the ministry with praise and worship. I let her really do a lot with the music part, even with technology. I don't know anything about it, so I let those who know do it. She has grown; she is an excellent speaker. She is going to school now; she is going to Nyack College. She has been on the Dean's list twice and gotten a couple of scholarships. She has grown in a lot of areas. She had to grow up quickly in a sense.</p> <p>That is the only thing, I don't let it affect me when some in the congregation say negative things about me or to my face; I never come home and talk about it. I keep her out of it because I never want her to look at that person a different way. I thank God that one thing that Pastor Ernest and I said that we would never talk negative about any member of our church in front of our children. And the other thing, I see even with my family, the negative part with my family. They don't always see, for example, they want to have celebrations on Saturday nights – a dinner, a family dinner. I say to them, "I can't go." They want to know, "But why?" "Because I have to stand before people tomorrow; I want to be fresh; I have to hear from God." I don't go out. Saturday is the day that I am usually in the house all day. They don't understand that, and they say, "You put your church before us." "No, I do not put the church before you." "So, why not let us have dinner after church on Sunday. What is wrong with that?" So, they have conformed. If we are</p>

	going to have celebrations, we are going to have them on Sundays after church.
<b>Participant F</b>	<p>Because of having being involved for so long in ministry and seeing so many of my peers have challenges with their families, I made a quality decision when we started that our family would be first, not the church, not the members, not the ministry, but my relationship with my wife, my relationship with my children would be first and foremost. And God has blessed us amazingly, all three of the kids are leaders in the church ministering life, stable, love God, love each other, love us. You know, my youngest daughter Sarah is an attending physician in the Emergency Room at St. Barnabas's Hospital First Responder, loves God, ministers the word. My son Matthew, the youngest, he is my assistant pastor. His grasp for the ministry, and my daughter Rachel is an Assistant Principal at the number one high school in New York called P Tech. They are doing well. God has blessed us. My wife and I have been married for forty years. My wife, a couple of years ago, obtained her doctorate. She is now an adjunct professor at one of the area's colleges here. As I have said, we put family first. I did not put ministry first.</p> <p>So, you know, when you talk about success, numbers may not reflect it in the pews, but let's face it, as ministers, how many ministers have we seen become big and had very prosperous churches, but their families and their relationships with their spouses were, you know?... and I made a decision that was not going to be me, man. You know?</p>
<b>Participant G</b>	Positive, it has drawn me closer to my wife in the midst of challenges. We draw closer. We talk it out; we think it out. We are going to a retreat on Monday. We go every year to a retreat to be ministered to as a couple. As a family, the whole family is going. The kids will be ministered to also. We have used challenges as an opportunity to get closer to each other and closer to God.
<b>Participant H</b>	It affected my relationship with my wife in a negative way because I was all about ministry helping church folks. Not realizing at the time my wife was my primary ministry. I was expecting her to walk side-by-side with me. But I guess she felt that I was cheating on her with the church. I could not understand how she would think that; I thought she would be willing to help like I was helping. But, I guess I forgot the fact that she was a woman who has her own personal needs. They were spiritual, but not church spiritual. That is how it affected. I enjoy doing ministry as far as helping people, I still do. But, I had just had to manage it better.

**Question 15. From your experience, how have ministerial challenges affected the growth of the ministry - negative or positive?**

<b>Participant A</b>	Positively. I take challenges to heart to find a way to overcome obstacles. Never allow a situation to stop progress. I model my ministry from the work of Nehemiah. I love his story.
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<b>Participant B</b>	<p>We give the unadulterated word of God and if they are seeking that, they stay and grow. If people come and aren't ready for that, they make a stink, they murmur and complain and cause confusion.</p> <p>We've had people come to be part of the ministry, we appoint them to help, and then they turn on us by sharing confidential information with non-members who in turn incite confusion, and cause others to leave or to murmur over the word.</p> <p>We've had others invite family members to attend, they receive the word, but because some members weren't secure in their walk with the LORD, caused babes to fall away because they thought the ministry had foundational issues because murmuring was being spewed by those close to leadership. We are praying for their growth and have finally begun to see change for the better.</p> <p>Just because the number of congregants has increased is no guarantee that the ministry is growing. The increase of character of the parishioners is a better indicator.</p>
<b>Participant C</b>	<p>Again, when you are here this long, ministry is dynamic. We have watched the church grow. We have ordained and licensed ministers in the ministry. We have trained them, equipped them; I have at one point had twelve elders on staff. So, I have seen the church grow. I have seen the praise and worship department strong. How to maintain that and gain momentum where you can continue going? I have not experienced that yet. What I have experienced is going up, going up, and some element of warfare coming in, and then we had a decrease, and then you have to rebuild again. And then you build up again and there is another hit. And you're really trying to get to the place in the spirit and in prayer, how to abort the attacks where growth can be sustained. And sometimes the enemy can hit the pastor, and if the enemy hits the pastor, then the people will scatter. Sometimes it's the hit on the pastor; sometimes it's the hit on somebody else, or various hits. Over the course of twenty-four years, there have been so many different ways where we have seen the ministry decrease from a high place, but you just have to stay committed and be willing to start over again until the Lord releases you to your next assignment. And so, challenges are important because they are opportunities for your people to learn from to grow through, and so I have a core group of people who have sustained every challenge we have gone through, and you can see it in them—that having gone through those challenges—they are powerful people. They are strong people because they did not run. They stayed. Remained. They are my go-to people; that is why I am very protected of their state of mind and so forth, but they have remained.</p>
<b>Participant D</b>	<p>Well, I think because I am transparent about it, it hasn't affected it negatively because it allowed me to share how important it is for quality time with family. It allowed me to be very transparent about the correctional system, and it can impact the entire family, not just the individual. So, I don't think that it impacted the church negatively. Because for most parts many of them have been with us close to the beginning, if not the beginning</p>

	of the church, so they know what we have poured in, so it let them know no matter how much you pour in, you still have to try to be careful and cautious about this other kind of support that these children need.
<b>Participant E</b>	(What) the challenges negatively (affect) is our time. Our worship time is from eight am to ten-thirty am. We have to be out of the sanctuary by 10:30. That is a strain because when we have a speaker, we usually go over. With me I have scheduled myself. I have timed myself to make sure that I don't speak no more than thirty to forty minutes, and that is a negative. A positive side is we can do everything that we need to do in two and a half hours. I don't have that many challenges. If we had a bigger congregation maybe it would be a little more challenging, but right now, no.
<b>Participant F</b>	I believe that me being a bi-vocational minister has affected the lack of growth in my church. Because my reality is, you know, you don't have energy for everything. You know, I realize that leading a program that is the faith-based Christian program that is licensed by the State of New York (it is the only one in the entire state), and I have led this group for the past 20-plus years, and my church suffered. Come on. Who has the energy to do both equally and as effectively? And I had to admit that, you know, the church suffered. But I believed that I was in the will of God leading this secular agency. You know, so when we talk about success, you know, you have to look at success from a different perspective. I had to train myself not to get so caught up, when I did not see the numbers, when we did not see some outward appearance of success. I had to look at the whole picture, you know, of effectiveness. Are we effective in what we are planting? In what we are doing? Are we effective? Samuel, all the kids in our church have graduated from college. We have made every kid who was a member of our church, who has graduated from high school and showed us an entrance into college or secondary school, we gave them a scholarship. And if they graduated from college, we sowed seed into them. We wanted to support their success and their stability and education. We have a congregation that is small, but professional people.
<b>Participant G</b>	Negatively, when different ministers have been familiar, extra familiar with my wife and I, it bleeds across their leadership. And there have been attempts to be division because of that particular leader. So, that is the negative side of it, but when that person is removed, if they need to be removed, it has caused us to grow. We recognized where we are missing it, where we need to improve as leaders. But when I recognized that a leader is toxic, they don't need to be there. We will work with them, as long as they are willing to be worked with. But if they made up their minds that they are going to hold on to a mindset that is poisonous to our church, we will remove them from leadership and give them less and less responsibilities and talk with them and prayer with them, and direct them. I have even asked people if they need to leave. "Have you thought about leaving since you are so unhappy?" I don't try to hold on to anybody at the church. If they want to

	<p>go, we bless them. Sometimes we take up an offering and send them on their way and point them to another church that they can grow from. But we never try to hold on to anybody. We are willing – people don't want to leave, sometimes they fight leaving when God is dealing with them about leaving. "You can leave, it is okay. We are going to grow." Every time a person left, God has sent us two or three other good workers. If we find a leader who is strong-willed and poisonous in the culture of the church, we have talked to them and tried to work with them as long as possible. And if things don't change, we have to remove them.</p>
<b>Participant H</b>	<p>It has affected us; well that is a good question. I had some folks, from the ministerial standpoint, who came up with some different theological beliefs, and they would try to force that on the church, and I had to step in and stop it quickly because it caused some people to leave, which was fine, but it could be looked at—I am losing people—that is a negative, but I looked at it as a positive because unity in the body of Christ is very important to me. I just believe that God is not a God of confusion. So, that was my challenge. So, it was negative and positive; it all depends on how you want to look at it. Now if I rephrase the question, I could also look at it: there were times when most of my key workers were bi-vocational and you could not have them doing certain things in the church because they had other jobs, other responsibilities. So, to be able to have a church operating eight hours a day is really impossible. That was a challenge for me because I trying to do youth ministry and I do not have anybody who could do it, because they are working; that was difficult. It still is difficult.</p>

**Question 16. Describe from your experience, how ministerial challenges affected the overall quality of family life.**

<b>Participant A</b>	<p>Ministerial challenges can be affected when family life is involved. I experienced something once that caught me off guard dealing with a problematic member. This person tried me to the bitter end. One day while preparing for church he called me and upset my morning. My wife was in the room asking me who was I talking to and what was going on. I broke unexpectedly. I literally was shaken by the conversation and how I had to deal with this problem on a Sunday morning. This person left the ministry. I loved working along with him but there was a change of attitude where he lost the respect for me and became too familiar and common. I don't miss the drama.</p>
<b>Participant B</b>	<p>I found that even though my wife was eventually won over to the ministry, and the part I played in it, I had to modulate how deep I got at home in order not to smother my kids with my ministerial responsibilities to the church. I allowed them to join sports teams or after school activities. I didn't always attend or participate but I didn't interfere with their participation either. They weren't the ones who had to minister or be prepared to do so. Even on vacation if I wasn't careful, the cares of preparation for ministry—especially</p>

	<p>in the early days, threatened to intrude even on my ability to get rest. It still does at times.</p> <p>My wife came to understand the needs and pulls of working in the ministry for me to prepare for worship service or bring the word but only complained if it lasted all week. It was fortunate we didn't have multiple services during the week. I still had to have time with her and with our sons in some capacity and I was able to do that.</p> <p>In the beginning of this ministry, I had to prepare to prepare because my musical ability on the keyboard wasn't on par with my ability to lead worship or sing or even bring the word on Sunday. So, I had to practice playing keyboard more, but my family consistently pulled me away from any dedicated practice. I could prepare to bring the word because my wife understood that. Otherwise, there was always something that needed to be done, or made, or fixed, or corrected, or travelled to or attended. My family eventually learned to adjust after a while. They realized this was part of who I was and called upon to do, and I was going to do it, and have time for them too.</p> <p>Many times, though, the challenges of ministry and family life helped ground me. If it weren't for the ministry, I would be pulled into the unnecessities of suburban life that don't usually lead to spiritual growth but play to the flesh.</p> <p>When I was part of a larger congregation, there were more people to shoulder the responsibility built into having to minister to others, but it was still a responsibility, and I was never one to be part of a ministry and do little more than attend services.</p>
<b>Participant C</b>	<p>We would say, I have not had any families or couples who have gotten divorced or anything like that; there may arise many challenges where I might be meeting with a husband and a wife, or the children and them, over an issue. We had one issue where a young lady, her daughter, allowed herself to go outside during church and get with a boy who she asked to meet her at the church. And unbeknown to us, they were kissing and making out on the church's property and got caught. And that created an opportunity for the church to minister to the girl and minister to the parents and assure them that we will put mechanisms in place to protect that from happening again. So, the church ended up hiring security. We had no security prior to that. So that security now creates a sense of safety and security in the lives of the parents, in the lives of all of us that not only led to us getting a security officer, but it led to him giving us counsel. Cause he was in the military and one time he worked as a police officer. And he recommended getting a walkie-talkie in the back in case we had a shooter in the Church. We went to another level of overall safety with the counsel of this security guard; we keep all the doors locked except the front door during church. There are a whole lot of things we gained from that crisis that I would say overall benefitted the congregants and the family overall from that crisis. We are always working to make sure that our communication improves. So, sometimes if our communication is not up to par, it may create a crisis in a</p>

	<p>family. Where the parents might feel, for example, we have a lot of children who attend the church whose parents do not attend the church. And their faithfulness to church and giving their lives to the Lord, we are not willing to baptize them. We had to learn, since we got in trouble with one parent through lack of communication. “I did not tell my child to be baptized. I don’t know about this child being baptized. How come he didn’t come through us?” So, we had that blind spot due to the fact that the parents are not in church. So, for all the children and teenagers who want to be baptized, they have to get a parental slip. So, we will meet with the parents in the home, and if they approve, we will baptize them; and if they don’t, we won’t. So, we had to learn that sometimes the challenges became the opportunity for our growth because we could have blind spots. Certain procedural principals were not in place and it created a situation, and out of the situation came policy and procedures and increased communication styles, and there is a host of examples I can give in regard to that. Yes, challenges can help us to become a better church.</p>
<b>Participant D</b>	<p>I think as far as the quality of family life—I think that sometimes we will put that face on that all is well and that we are pushing forward, but on the inside, there is that disappointment because you know what the potential was, you know what could have been. And so, although you could sit around the table, I have these family meals where we sit around the table, we talk, we laugh and what have you, but as we go forward and go our individual ways, I feel that they are not as close. The uncles would say your grandparents did not deserve what you have taken them through because we also know what they have given to you. And so, there is this—I don’t, you know, I don’t ever have the word to describe it. But it causes—not a dysfunction, but an imbalance of true family relationship. In there because not only are they disappointed in that person not reaching their potential, but they also feel that it is not fair what we are going through because of how much we have poured into our grandson, you know.</p>
<b>Participant E</b>	<p>When my ex-husband left, it was challenging because the church board said that I could not stay in the house. There was no pay. And they told me I had to give up my car. And I understood, but it was a financial challenge for a while. It was a challenge for me to come back to Brooklyn. I thank God I had my co-op to come back to, but it was challenging because we do not have as much room as we had before, so that was challenging. But through it all, I thank God that I did have some place to come back to. I remember complaining to my mom and she said to me, “By you complaining, it shows that you are not grateful.” She said, ‘Be grateful that you were not abused; be grateful for your life; just be grateful to God.’ So, I always look at now, whatever happens to me or doesn’t happen. I say, “It is only by the grace of God. It is only by the grace of God. It is only by the grace of God I am here. It is only by the grace of God I am in my right mind.”</p>
<b>Participant F</b>	<p>As I said, the quality of my family life. How it has affected it? Quite positively. We put the family first. We attempted to balance the church, the</p>

	members. (Not) like the ministers who live in the parsonage—no good. So, we have put boundaries around our family, boundaries around the growth of the children, so that the church would not have a negative effect. Too many ministers have lost their families, have been not good examples. Their children have been not good examples. And we tried to, as I said ministry starts at home with me and my wife, me and my children. It is not the pulpit; it is the family.
<b>Participant G</b>	<u>My personal family life.</u> It actually drew us closer. Like I said, we use the opportunity when we have challenges to get closer to each other and God. So, as long as home is in order, everything else lines up. But when home is not in order, I rather lose the ability to minister than to lose my family. We, both my wife and I, have the mindset that we will leave ministry before we allow that to destroy our marriage, our family. Our kids, will not have what used to be the PK status in the sense that Father, Mom chose the church over us. But we let them know that they are number one. What we do is just affirm our children, affirm our children, we affirm each other, love on each other, and make each other priority. We refuse to allow ministry or challenges in ministry to destroy our family
<b>Participant H</b>	When I started pastoring my kids were grown and off to school. So that worked out pretty good. They were doing their own thing. The only impact would be on my wife. If I can throw this in there, I am very mindful of the importance of work, life, Church balance. And so, I make sure I don't impose anything on my people that is going to affect those areas, or throw those areas out of whack. So, if it means that I only see you down at this church once or twice a week, so be it. We are not going to be here seven days a week.

**Question 17. From your experience, how has your leadership style affected your quality of life let - negative or positive?**

<b>Participant A</b>	My current leadership style has helped me tremendously. I have gained the trust, influence, and respect of those who are following me today. It took me adjusting and adapting to the voice and allowing God's Spirit to lead and take charge. I don't trust in my own thinking, or my own thoughts. I am a believer in the scripture, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not to thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him and he will direct your paths". In closing, it has been a positive experience.
<b>Participant B</b>	I don't think I've identified what my leadership style is. I'm not bossy or overbearing. I present options and encourage people to choose the right one so they don't have to go through hard times unnecessarily. I don't judge them if they don't take the option I present, but I will teach the biblical preference but step back to let them make their own choices and I later discuss the consequences of their actions.
<b>Participant C</b>	The pastor is evolving too. If I would go back twenty-four years when I was thirty, full of energy, full of strength, and ready to run and ready to go, I might not have been wise, but I was so young. And, I did not practice the

	<p>sabbath for rest, so sometimes by not delegating and not resting, it opened the door for my health being attacked. And we had to step back; we realized you need to make some adjustments. I have secured twice a year going to a prayer retreat for three days. Three days in October, and three days in March, I would go to a place called God's House of Prayer and be alone with the Lord. That has helped as I have gotten older and more mature—delegating responsibility. Early when I started pastoring, I had this attitude that this is what we are going to do. I don't do that anymore. It is more now a pastor, elders get together, plan together, organize together. It should have been that way in the beginning, but it wasn't. And now it is a shared responsibility. I might have a final say on some things. By doing that, it is helping me. You want to have longevity in ministry. I allow the same Board to speak into my life as well as the pastor that is over me. They may ask me, "Pastor, are you drinking your water 'cause that is a weakness". I communicate those weaknesses; they stay on top of me to make sure that I am not getting dehydrated. I have been to the hospital three times for dehydration. "You are drinking your water, Pastor?" I am going to get some water once the interview is over. (Keep a case in your office). When your leadership style is you, and just you leading, that is negative. But when you share your leadership with others, it is positive. My leadership style has moved from negative to positive. I am still learning, still growing, still becoming. I think recently, I have identified another weakness in my leadership; it is in area of relationship. My temperament is that of a contemplator, and while I was a student at ORU, I scored the highest in my class as an introvert. So, it is not my temperament nor nature to be engaging. It is not my strength. I am gaining insight as to how strong the relationship component plays in the area of ministry. So, I write down on my prayer list, Lord help me to become stronger relationally with my family, friends, members, and community. Because I can become very comfortable, I can go do my job and then move into me, myself and be fine. So, I am learning I got to do something to increase communication, engagement, association. If I see a big crowd coming, I am taking off. One-on-one, I am good. So, I am trying now in this season to conquer whatever that is that makes me take flight when that large crowd is gathering.</p>
<b>Participant D</b>	<p>Well, I am going to say because I am very transparent. I shoot from the hip. What is positive about it? I don't have to try to remember what I said. I know what I said because I told you the truth the first time. I don't have to remember what part of this I revealed because if I am going to tell it I am going to tell it like it is. So, that in itself is a blessing to me. I think that it is also a blessing to the congregation because I am not ashamed to declare—my husband and I have been married fifth two year and I am able to say to them how much I love my husband the things I will do for my husband as far as cooking and serving and support. Sometimes the sisters don't like it because the brothers would say, "See, see, Pastor is doing it, how come you can't do it?" But the point is being opened and being honest, and you are telling people that you can't just expect to be loved, you got to sow what you</p>

	want to reap. So, I think that that transparency has helped the church as well as helped me because I am held accountable for what I am openly declare I am doing. So even when I get kind of um um um and don't feel like it, I am still going to go forward if he says that he wants chicken and fish for dinner that's what he is going to get. Whether I have to feel like going to fish market or not, that is what I am going to do because I love him.
<b>Participant E</b>	My leadership style, I believe in a negative way. Sometimes, as being a female, they don't take you as seriously as if I was a male. Just last week I receive a not-so-nice letter. And my daughter says, "Ma, you know if you were a male, they would have never written you that letter." The negative part, I think that I am too sympathetic and that can be negative. And I say that because, we are trying to save money to buy or get a building. So ever since I became Senior Pastor, I have not taken a salary from my church. I don't get a salary, but they have done some things for me that I am very grateful for, so I look at that as being a positive. My leadership style, I always say that I will never ask my church to do anything for me personally, which some people say is not good, but that is just the way I lead. And I feel because of my leadership style, I treat everybody the same. I respect them all the same. What I do for one, I would do for the other.
<b>Participant F</b>	I think my leadership style, I have been challenged by it. I have been challenged, and I tried to adjust and grow as the church has evolved. The question, how has my leadership style affected my quality of life, negative and positive? I would say negatively, I think that times of being honest and trying to maintain a standard of truth, I think it has hindered the growth of the church. If I had ministered from a—you know there are different styles of ministry. Because I have operated in a prophetic trust, I have seen how, you know, through manipulation, through all kinds of things, could bring all kinds of results, but I refused to manipulate. I refuse, you know, to promote or project certain patterns that seem to be success driven. I know today, church has become very user friendly, very corporate in its understanding of how, and I kind of felt that I could not necessarily adapt or adopt to that kind of stuff. I am sure it has caused the church to suffer as a result of it. You know? Yeah.
<b>Participant G</b>	My leadership style has caused me to prosper in the quality of my life because people tend to join the church because I strive to empower them to do what they were created to do. So, my leadership style is one of teams, and empowering everyone out there and put them to work, and helping them to discover the gifts and the talents and to release them into what God has called them to (do). So, the quality of my life, it has brought me joy. My leadership style is to work in teams, and to help them to utilize the gift and talents that God has placed in their lives.
<b>Participant H</b>	My doctorate is in leadership. So, I realized that I had to change my style. I come from a military back ground, so Chief Williams could not be Chief Williams in church. There is Pastor Williams who every now and then would go into his chief mode. So, my leadership style vacillated depending on my audience. I did not realize that I would have to change that much. So, I think

	because I can go back between the two styles of leadership, it has been positive. When I say quality of life, it is my mental state when I am at peace I am good to go. I would say that the quality of life with my wife is also better. She is also former military.
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## Results

### Theme Development

The purpose of this study was to allow pastors in small Black churches the opportunity to share the challenges they experienced in the 21st-century. Many of these pastors shared their experiences during the COVID epidemic. The data collected from the eight interviews were analyzed using the modification of the van Kaam method of analysis of phenomenological data (Moustakas, 1994). This chapter also analyzes the data to identify the themes and look at each response to the research questions.

**Table (4) Prevalent Themes from Research Participants' Responses**

Code	Subcategory	Category
Help them apply the word of God to their lives, refer to professional for counseling	work with them visit them	Spiritual guidance
areas that need to improve different culture	win souls reluctance disciples of Christ	Evangelism
when there is a crisis first thing to do	seek help	Prayer
doing better than other small churches	COVID	Finances
financially sound	Pandemic	

By applying horizontalization to analyze the data, this procedure helped to code and categorized the common experiences (Moustakas, 1994). This procedure identified four themes as listed in (Table 4). Four themes were common in the data. The four themes are spiritual guidance, evangelism, prayer, and finances.

### **Spiritual Guidance**

There have been many discussions about religion and spirituality and how they impact individuals and society. Those who give care to sick family members have learned to ameliorate burden, anxiety, and social isolation by working on their spiritual well-being (Baumgardner & Mayo, 2021). Spiritual guidance helps by giving care to the caregivers. The participants recognized the importance of spiritual guidance in the lives of the congregants. They honed in on giving guidance whenever they saw a need develop.

**(Table 5) Participants Responses Supporting Spiritual Guidance as a Prevalent Theme**

<b>1. Spiritual Guidance</b>	
Participant B	We would recommend the person agree to submit to discipling from a mature congregant or an elder to help them study and apply the word of God to their lives. If that help is unproductive, then we recommend they work with an outside licensed counselor.
Participant C	As a principle, we love them, affirm them, work with them. I spend a lot of time talking to them, listening to them—especially the men who may be going through, but for the most part, if they are in crisis, we refer them to agencies that can assist them, work with the families in regard to that. We have the opportunity to go into those institutions and give them visits. So, we visit them when they are in the institution.
Participant D	But I think that we are responsible to recognize what we cannot carry, what we cannot deliver people from, and that is in the sense that people actually need some serious professional help. That even though, like I have a Master's in Guidance and Counseling, but there are things that I am not trained to do with psychological issues. And you have to be honest within yourself as to what you can help and what you cannot do for your congregants. And so, when you are aware of these—and you really need to be able to be aware of the different flags, even those prompts that cause people to go into—have

	those different challenges—you have to be honest enough to say, “Okay, this is outside my sphere of support. I can still support them spiritually, but at the same time, I can walk them through the process of getting the right kind of help and support that they need”.
Participant F	Because my background has been in mental health, we would definitely refer. We will kind of ascertain what the challenges are, and we would try to assist and make referral to the appropriate kind of resources: assessment, therapist, what have you.
Participant G	We usually just love on them as they are. If it really gets out of hand, usually we have therapists inside the congregation, so, if it is something that needs to be addressed, we will encourage them to go to a therapist, or go find one for themselves. We recommend Christian therapists, Christian counseling, but we do not do anything there because we are not equipped, except for praying for them and giving them spiritual advice. We have a list of people that we are in partnership with—Christian counselors—that we would recommend.

## Evangelism

For most churches, evangelism is an essential part of their practice. According to Abraham’s book (1989, as cited in Penner, 2021) the study, the book offers something wholly new and necessary for the academy and church. Abraham’s book is a robust, biblically based, orthodox-conscious, and rhetorically powerful account of evangelism that is not only theologically stimulating but also practically relevant across many generations (Penner, 2021). Evangelism is the first step of introducing Christ to non-Christians, then leading them to discipleship. Half of the eight pastors highlighted that evangelism is one area that needs improvement in their churches.

**Table (5) Participants Responses Supporting Evangelism as a Prevalent Theme**

<b>2. Evangelism</b>	
Participant B	<u>Our outreach ministry</u> could use improvement. There are a few members whose hearts burn for the lost, but none ever step up to even look into a ministry to reach people on the streets (or elsewhere) as a group. As individuals, some have reached out to others, and some of these people have become key to our membership.
Participant C	All of them. Which area needs to improve? I would think the strongest area in the years I have been pastoring that is the weakest is Evangelism; it’s

	Evangelism. I feel as though people are so busy—focused on jobs, and living, and life, and the American dream. The time that it takes to invest in outreach—I know it sounds contradictory that we are strong in missions in one area, and then weak in the local area of evangelism because it is kind of challenging to get people to embrace that their motive for being in church is to win souls to grow the church.
Participant G	And the last area is <u>evangelism</u> . We are in a highly Hispanic area, and we have tried to do outreach, giving out clothing and food, looking for ways to engage the community, but it has not been successful. And we are really needing help and some wisdom to reach the community. Most of the people, I would say all of our people that go to the church, do not belong to the community. So, our church does not reflect that community.
Participant H	I would say for my church it is the area of evangelism. I think it is more so in this day and age, people are reluctant to just approach people and invade their privacy. So, people are just kind of reluctant to go and just approach people—safety concerns.

## Prayer

All eight of the pastors in this study talked about the importance of prayer in the work that they do. One pastor started prayer in his church when COVID began in March 2020 and have been praying at 6:00 a.m., 12:00 noon, and 6:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. This prayer has been going for the past eighteen months and continues to this day. Although prayer is a major part of the ministry in all of these churches, not all the members show up for prayer. On a Church Engagement Survey, the question “I spent time in worship or prayer every day,” scored the lowest a 3.18 out of 5.0 (Bernard Lukenbill & Young, 2020). Another pastor stated that about twenty to fifteen percent of the members participate in the prayer service. And although the service is conducted over Zoom, the pastor indicated that the attendance has dropped.

**Table (6) Participants’ Responses Supporting Prayer as a Prevalent Theme**

<b>3. Prayer</b>	
Participant A	When a crisis takes place, I begin with prayer. I have to consult God to deal with the issue at hand.

Participant B	I pray for his guidance and then I go for a walk if I need to. I get away from everyone to be quiet and allow God to speak to me. Even if I would personally want to address the issue.
Participant C	And we have had many crises and the first thing that I would do is pray... There is a support system, so prayer, council, I think those are the main ways—venting.
Participant D	Be still and know... You know. I do mean that seriously. I just don't mean that just because the scripture says, "God says be still and know that I am God". You have to be still.
Participant G	First thing I do I spend some time praying, praying in other tongues, seeking the Lord for wisdom and guidance. But before I go and make a decision and respond out of emotions or out of the flesh, I spend time in prayer.

## Finances

The small Black church can continue to operate and service the people, if it is supported financially by its members. Participant F mentioned, "I have talked to several ministers whose churches did not make it through this because of members, and the church itself could not handle not being in a building. We have grown during this time. Our resources have grown membership has grown." Some small Black churches closed their doors permanently, while for Catholicism, churches were amalgamated due to the decrease in income (Sherwood, 2021). During the past months of COVID, many churches have closed their doors permanently. However, most of the churches in this study have done extremely well financially during the past months of COVID.

**Table (7) Participants' Responses Supporting Finances as a Prevalent Theme**

<b>4. Finances</b>	
Participant A	The most prosperous areas of this institution—I would have to say the financial support is phenomenal. The ministry purchased a new complex for \$510K in 2013. In the Spring of 2020, the ministry became mortgage-free. The people have sown greatly into this work. For that, I am grateful.
Participant B	Financially, we are sound. We are a tithe paying ministry and we support a sister ministry in India and have been most of the time we've been in existence. I think those are the two biggest successes. We are a congregation under fifty people, where most of the adults and young people with jobs, tithe.

	Over the past five years, we have continued uninterrupted support of a mission ministry in India. We've helped them pay for schooling, buy land, build a Christian academy and provide food and shelter for their ministers to continue missionary work in other parts of India including along the border of China. We provided life giving funds during the last eighteen-month COVID epidemic.
Participant C	Somehow or another, through the past year, through COVID our finances have been the strongest. It has been more stable during the pandemic than it was anytime—all the twenty-four years. The year of the pandemic was the most stable year financially to the church... And somehow or another the finances have been—over the past twenty-four years every year, I have suffered not getting paid certain periods of time, but I was paid the whole year of 2020 and 2021 thus far. Since COVID—praise Him; hallelujah, in Jesus name. And that is not a lot—I am not getting paid a lot, but that creates a peace of mind knowing that you can pay your bills
Participant D	Where God guides, He provides. And over and over I mean testimony after testimony that building is like four times what we were going to build. And we owe nothing on the building. The building has been debt-free. Since the day we closed on that building, it has been debt-free. When we had it—when we did have it appraised, it was appraised at two million dollars. We ended up paying a million one for it, and it is debt-free. And we are a small church and we have only done what God told us to do: tithes and offering. We did not sell no fish sandwiches; we did not rape the sheep. We did what God told us to do, and we just got the assessment for the building from the town, and the building is now assessed at \$4.5 million.
Participant E	Those who have been there for the last five years have grown spiritually; they have even grown in their finances... For the past year with COVID, our success—believe it or not—has been in the area of our finances, and I give my daughter credit for that because she put us on Push-pay. People can go in anytime and pay their tithe. Most of the people are paying their tithe electronically. Most people are saying to me that this is perfect.
Participant F	We have grown during this time. Our resources have grown membership has grown... Many of our members have bought new homes and gotten new jobs and have prospered. We have seen testimonies of increase even during this time of famine.
Participant G	We were growing before COVID. But COVID has made us more visible online. We are doing better than churches our size. The giving has been great. The giving has tripled since COVID. We are growing. We are getting people giving. They are giving online. People we don't even know. And people are inquiring about membership.

### **Research Questions Responses**

To answer the research questions and sub-questions, eight pastors were a part of this study. One-on-one interviews were conducted via Zoom and data was collected and analyzed using van Kaam's method of analysis (Moustakas 1994). The research questions are all open-ended questions. Furthermore, they were designed to allow the participants the platform to share their experiences in each area. How do pastoral leaders in small Black congregations describe their experience navigating conflict within their congregation? How do leaders in the African American church experience the effect and impact that leadership style and job satisfaction have on their families?

### **Additional Research Questions**

The additional research questions help by providing insight into the effects of challenges on each leader's quality of life.

RQ1: What is the meaning of emotional and mental health for a church leader?

RQ2: How do ministerial challenges affect the quality of family life?

RQ3: What personal experiences affect an individual's leadership style choice?

For the question: How do pastoral leaders in small Black congregations describe their experience navigating conflict within their congregation? The participants responded to this research question in interview question numbers three, seven, and ten. When dealing with mental challenges, they give their congregants the emotional and spiritual support that they need. For those who need professional help, they refer to professionals within their community. They also shared that mental health is viewed as weak for African Americans; therefore, many of their congregants, especially the men, do not come forward to seek help when dealing with mental health issues. One pastor recognized that it was important for the congregation to learn the word

of God and apply it to their lives. She mentioned that she recognized the change in the members who were attending weekly Bible studies. They were more social and interacted with other more. One who was afraid to pray in front of other people had gained the confidence to pray during the prayer service.

One participant mentioned that there was a conflict between his leadership style and another one of the leaders. The leader/elder wanted to apply his own leadership principle to the area of ministry that he was overseeing; however, his style differed from the practice and vision of the church. The pastor gave him an ultimatum: either he complies or leaves. He and his wife left the church.

For the following research question, How do leaders in the African American church experience the effect and impact of leadership style and job satisfaction on their families? Questions fifteen, sixteen, and seventeen allow the interviewees the opportunity to freely share from their experience whatever they wanted to share about the effects that ministry had on their job satisfaction and family life. Two of the pastors shared that their spouses divorced them, and the experience was very challenging. One pastor shared that her mental health was a crisis, and she sought counseling. She attests that if it was not for God and counseling, she does not know if she would have made it to this point. The other pastor spends much time in single prayer retreats and speaking to his mentor, making a difference in his life.

Another pastor shared that he thought his wife was on board with him when he was called to be the senior pastor. After realizing that his wife felt he was cheating on her by giving more time and service to the church, he made sure he was ministering to his wife's needs before he took care of the church's business. He said that decision helped his marriage. Both he and his wife are U.S. vets. Another pastor also shared that his wife was not on board with him when he

was called to pastor, but eventually realized that it was God's will for his life. One participant shared that she and her husband have been married for fifty-one years. She attributed the longevity of their marriage to the decision they made to love each other first. She mentioned that it didn't matter what her husband wanted for dinner; if she did not have it in the house, she was going to the store to purchase it and cook it for him. She said, "because I love him."

For the additional research questions: RQ1: What is the meaning of emotional and mental health for a church leader? Interview questions number eight and thirteen allow the participants the opportunity to share their experiences. One pastor stated that the work of the ministry is exhausting. Another pastor mentioned that she tells her parishioners and leaders to take time for self-care. Another participant shared that one of his leaders is burnt out due to losing his job. One participant stated that she noticed that members are not as emotionally healthy as they should be. She attributes this to her experience where parishioners and other pastors avoid telling the truth because she believes that they need to work on their "emotional intelligence." Recent studies have shown that emotional intelligence is linked to better resilience by promoting greater feelings of efficacy (Cuartero, & Tur, 2021). So, the research does support this pastor's assumption that emotional intelligence does promote better resilience.

For the question: RQ2: How do ministerial challenges affect the quality of family life? Question fourteen allow the participant the freedom to describe how ministerial challenges affected their quality of family life. One pastor shared that if he was married, he would have to shift his focus. He would not be able to put into the ministry the time that he puts in weekly. Another participant shared that her daughter told her that while they were always present with her in ministry, they were never "with her." Her children felt that they always had to share her with the work of the ministry and others. On the other hand, after one pastor was divorced, her

daughter joined her in ministry, and they have an excellent relationship. Another pastor shared that because he witnessed many who sacrificed family for ministry, he decided that his wife and children were going to be first before ministry.

RQ3: What personal experiences affect an individual's leadership style choice?

Questions twelve and thirteen allow participants the opportunity to explore their leadership style choice. One pastor shared that out of the forty small Black churches in his town; he is the only one that has been seminary trained. His training gave him the foundation that he needs to maneuver the difficulty that he experienced, especially with his divorce. He also shared that experience caused him to grow where he realized that leadership was about being a part of a team. Another participant shared that he has learned to "exercise patience" when dealing with people. One pastor shared that it can be draining, and you recognize that you need to regroup. He also shared that this is when he needed to take some time for self-care because to continue, he would not be effective as a leader.

### **Summary**

The experiences of each of these pastors differ in many ways. However, their ministerial practice is similar. They all mentioned loving people who are dealing with mental health issues and other crises. As put by one pastor, the ministry is a twenty-four-seven job. Pastors are always available to their members. Some pastors have a team of elders and deacons who help to take up the slack, but most members seek out the senior pastor when they are in crisis. This chapter presented the experiences of eight pastors. Their experiences are a look into the challenges that pastors of small Black churches experience. The data collected gives a broader array of challenges and ways of handling them. They shared what worked and what did not work for them. This information outlines the importance of family before ministry, marriage before

ministry, and children before ministry. This data gives an experiential view of how one can navigate through ministry and be successful in one's family life.

## **Chapter Five: Conclusion**

### **Overview**

This chapter reports the findings of this study on the challenges that clergy in small Black churches face in the 21st-century. It lays out the experiences that these pastors shared during the interview process. It highlights the challenges and how each pastor found a resolution. The chapter also shared the participants' responses to the research questions. It examines the leadership styles of these pastors in dealing with their challenges in comparison to the leadership styles discussed in the literature review. Investigations are made on the implications, delimitations, and recommendations for future research.

### **Summary of Findings**

The pastors in this study have a pastoring range of twelve to forty years. No two pastors responded the same way to any question. How do pastoral leaders in small Black congregations describe their experience navigating conflict within their congregations? Each individual had unique experiences and responded according to how they handled the challenges. Each individual's challenges affected them emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually. The church provided spiritual guidance, social support, mental support, and/or legal intervention to its members. By triangulating the responses of each pastor, the researcher identified their similarities and differences. All of these pastors assessed challenges, crises, and issues as they occurred. Their churches practiced treating everyone the same; no preferential treatment was given to any member. In any challenging situation, these pastors assessed the situation and relied upon those who were more skilled or trained to deal with the situation. When a member had mental health issues, they assessed the situation. If there was no professional counselor on staff, they referred the member to an outside Christian counselor.

All the participants agreed that spiritually their congregants were doing fine, but a couple mentioned that they focused on the emotional health of the people because it had become an issue with some individuals. How do leaders in the African American church experience the effect and impact that leadership style and job satisfaction have on their families? To meet the deficit in emotional health, they taught on the subject. One pastor used a curriculum on emotional health. Another pastor shared that one of the female members misinterpreted her husband's conversations with another female member as though she had an interest in her husband. She met with the pastor to discuss the situation and wanted the pastor to address the matter. The pastor spoke to her husband and the young lady and discovered that they were friends before he got married to his wife, and the young lady had no interest in her husband. She was talking to him about her own husband's job situation because of his sudden illness. The pastor could not help the young lady who brought the matter to her, and she left the church.

For the challenges that pastors experienced personally because of being in ministry, one pastor stated that ministry affected his personal relationship with his wife "in a negative way." What is the meaning of emotional and mental health for a church leader? This pastor focused on performing his job according to the denomination's guidelines; however, his wife was not on board with him. By carrying out his responsibilities as a pastor, his focus was on the guidelines that he had from the denomination; but his wife was not happy that the needs of the congregation were being met while she had to sit on the sidelines and wait for him. He did not have the energy or the time to meet the needs of the church and the needs of his wife. This pastor came up with a way where he could compromise and take care of both the church and his wife's needs. Another pastor shared that because his wife was in ministry with him, their relationship grew closer. They were handling the challenges as a team by praying together and seeking God and godly counsel.

He also mentioned that they go on a family retreat every year, where he and his wife are ministered to separately from their children. One divorced pastor shared that because he was now single, he could do much more for the Lord by serving the community and the people. He said most of the work that he does weekly visiting prisons and hospitals and making home calls, he would not have been able to do if he were still married. So, although he went through a crisis and is no longer married, he enjoys doing all that he currently does for the Lord. Another pastor shared the challenges of ministry have helped to ground her.

Another research question asked: How do ministerial challenges affect the quality of family life? Most of the pastors indicated that they focused on self-care to stay emotionally and mentally healthy. One participant shared that he had to learn how to be patient with people. He said that people's behavior is not predictable, and pastors cannot take what their people say personally. Another pastor shared that he was overwhelmed when he started pastoring. And he and another participant shared that seeking and receiving help through counseling helped them overcome the difficulty that they were experiencing.

An additional question: What personal experiences affect an individual's leadership style choice? A participant shared that because he had witnessed many families dissolve because of the demands of ministry, he put his family first. He had seen others in ministry sacrifice the relationship with their spouses, later go through divorces and lose the relationship with their children because of the anger of their children; so, he learned from the experience of others. Another pastor shared that she gave her children all that she could, and she kept them close to her; however, her custodial son succumbed to the pressure of peers and ended up in jail a few times. He is currently in jail. Although her son seemed to be a casualty, it was not because of her neglect. They did all that they could do for him, but he went the way of his friends on the streets.

Two pastors had to recover from the emotional and mental toil of going through their divorces. Both shared that they needed professional help to process all the emotional and mental strain that they were experiencing. Both referenced that they had to pay attention to their mental health. One mentioned that the experience was traumatic because the Church board divested both her and her ex-husband of the church's house and both of their cars. She had to look for a place to live and wait for the Board to decide if she was still the church's administrator. The Board kept her and later voted her in as the senior pastor. She said it took her many years of counseling to get over the traumatic event. Her experience helped her to develop a greater level of empathy and sensitivity towards individuals who experience relational issues.

### **Discussion**

This section discusses the findings of this study concerning the literature from Chapter Two. Burdick (2018) stated that leaders must recognize their church as a part of the universal Church. The leaders who divorced their spouses had a rippling effect in the churches where the pastors got a divorce. The discussion of the findings first looks at the experiences of the participants as compared to the leadership styles that the literature review highlights. The majority of these pastors focused on Transformational Leadership as they gave continued support to their workers and volunteers. All of these pastors practice Spiritual leadership (Cregård, 2017). They design their teachings and Bible study to focus on the mind (body), the heart, and the spirit of the individual.

One author believes that studying leadership can teach us the science of behavior (Malott 2016). This author highlighted four principles that were important to leadership. They are (1) commitment to principle, (2) independence, (3) resilience, and (4) consistency. These four characteristics tell about the drive of each leader (Malott 2016). These eight pastors all

demonstrated these four principles in the experiences they described during their interviews. These principles also help these leaders to find fulfillment in their work and their lives. Yearly retreats and time away from church leadership make a difference in the lives of leaders (Hartwig, 2016).

Edwards (2014) explained that there are three primary areas of focus for leaders. The first is the congregation as a micro-level structure; the second is the religious denomination or tradition (meso-level structure); the third is the US racialized social system (macro-level) social structure. When pastors and church leaders are not in sync with these areas, this can cause conflict in leadership, sometimes leading to church splits. One pastor in this research experienced this conflict with one of his leaders. He had to ask the leader to move on if he was not happy with the ministry.

On the other hand, the majority of the pastors shared about the struggles of their members economically. A few of these pastors minister in poor communities, and they have dedicated their teachings to help bring empowerment by encouraging their people to seek higher education. Liu, Wei, and Simon (2017) noted that in many states, the share of income held by the top percentile experienced a prolonged period of stability after World War II; this was also followed by a substantial increase in inequality during the 1980s and continues today. The goal of these pastors is to help their people advance themselves through educational empowerment.

Although the interview questions were designed to allow the interviewees to share their experiences, some interviewees gave short responses, demonstrating a reluctance to go beyond the surface to give more information that would speak to the additional research questions. For example, interview question eight gathered the data for RQ1; one interviewee stated, “the overall health of the leaders is acceptable;” another said, “spiritually they are healthy,” and another

interviewee just said, “excellent.” For some reason, these participants did not want to go beyond their brief statements. Although I asked all participants whether there was anything else, the pastors above did not elaborate. In contrast, Participant B acknowledged that leaders were growing, but they were all growing at their own rates. Participant C indicated how important it was for the leaders to take a day of rest. He mentioned that he takes time to observe the leaders, and if he recognized that they were getting exhausted with the ministry, he would take away some of their responsibilities. Participant D stated that she noticed when self-care was essential for herself, her husband, and her leaders. Within self-care, she included taking time to rest.

Interview question fourteen addressed research question RQ2. Participants C, D, E, and F explained how the quality of their family relations had been affected by ministerial challenges. Participants A, B, and G stated that ministry had a positive effect on their families. Only Participant H stated that the challenges had a negative effect on his marital relationship because, while he focused on his ministerial responsibilities and helping his people, his wife felt neglected. For RQ3, interview question thirteen introduced data that would address its question. All participants gave reasonable responses; they all talked about how they dealt with personal ministerial challenges. In addition, two participants in this sample dealt with divorce, both of which stemmed from misconduct. However, only Participant E elaborated on how the sexual misconduct affected her overall.

### **Empirical Literature**

Rowold et al. (2015) pointed out that a critical compare and contrast approach is missing to the dominant leadership theories and the empirical data that showed results within leadership theory. Leaders need people to lead; however, when leadership does not give the people the guidance they need to live better and more productive lives, people move on (Alonderiene &

Majauskaite, 2016). This study looked at the experiences of pastors in small Black churches in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The data shows that the participants in this study lead their congregants and guide them towards a better outcome. During the challenges of COVID, one pastor called on his church to pray five days a week. His transformational leadership style guided his congregants to a place of unity. He has empirical data that shows that the people who took part had an outcome that was better than those who did not. According to Pieterse et al. (2010), transformational leadership influences followers to rise above self-interest and look at the bigger picture: the benefit to all.

Another pastor rallied her people to donate coats to a community of individuals who needed outerwear during winter 2020. In examining the literature and the experiences and practices of these pastors, it is clear that pastors apply more than one leadership servant style in their practice. One participating pastor is very charismatic and influenced her people to give; simultaneously, she helped transform them from focusing on self to focusing on helping others. Grandy (2013) examined applying for-profit principles in the not-for-profit church. This author pointed out that while charismatic leaders drew upon transformational leadership, leadership practice was at the institution's foundation.

It is also important to note that all participants practiced biblical leadership, which focuses on the spiritual development of the people they serve (Kopiczko, 2017). The heart of biblical leadership is servant leadership and shepherd leadership (Resane, 2020). The leadership leads by demonstration serving others, and the shepherd is an example of a follower of Christ. All the pastors in this study served the people and were available twenty-four-seven to handle emergencies and crises.

## **Theoretical Literature**

In this study, two pastors received counseling because of the circumstances that developed in their lives. Individuals who go into the ministry when they have not resolved past injuries, struggles, and failures will struggle to be effective (Abraham, 2018). These pastors took time to resolve the difficulty of their experiences. They were honest and truthful, and they knew that they needed help, so they sought it. In taking the time to work on their issues, they better equipped themselves to be effective. Going into ministry without receiving the counseling they needed would only cause them to struggle to be effective (Abraham, 2018). This author mentioned that when leaders do not take the time to understand how the past affected and resolved the pain, their leadership style in the future will be influenced by unresolved conflict. Hiebler-Ragger et al. (2016) point out that the relationship between a believer and God has proven to have many psychological benefits. So, when leaders take the time to seek God for help in times of need, this helps their emotional and mental health.

All the participants in this study pointed out that Bible study and prayer are important practices in the lives of each Christian. One pastor attributed the growth of his ministry to the teaching of the Bible during the time of COVID. Another pastor shared that because the members came together and prayed, he saw the finances of the members increase and some bought houses. A pastor shared that they paid off the mortgage of the church building. Another participant shared that financially, the church was doing well. The success of these churches is attributed to the practice of sound biblical doctrine.

## **Implications**

Results from this study could be used to give seminary professors as well as clergy a more comprehensive insight into the struggles and challenges that small Black churches

experience. Participants in this study shared that personal experiences also contributed to the overall challenges that affected the decisions that they made. Since there is very little research done on the challenges that leaders in small Black churches experience, this phenomenological study provides information about these struggles and helps to bring awareness of the research gap that exists concerning small Black churches' challenges and struggles. Many of the pastors in small Black churches are not aware of the importance of understanding the struggles that their colleagues experience and how these other leaders found resolutions to these struggles. The insight into the information showed that only when a struggle became public, for example, a divorce, that other small Black churches within the area realized that there was a real issue. There was not a network of interdenominational churches within each area that would rally around common struggles in ministry or one's personal life.

### **Theoretical**

The theory that guided this research study was because of the gap that exists about small Black churches' struggle. Due and Due (2018) examine how the challenges that pastors experience within ministry sometimes often lead to depression. These authors believe that pastors must have a healthy outlet. Self-care is vital to ministerial survival. There must be someone they can talk to about the challenges they are experiencing. Sometimes the challenges lead to permanent church closures. Cafferata (2017) points out that while there is data available concerning church closures, there is very little research on the effect church closure has on the pastors' well-being.

### **Empirical**

There is little research documentation describing the challenges of these small Black churches. There is no empirical data showing studies on small Black churches' challenges. This

researcher found no data in the Literature review that was specifically focused on these churches. By examining the data of all the participants in this study, four themes were prevalent: spiritual guidance, evangelism, prayer, and finances. These themes were prevalent because of the experience of the church during COVID. While most of these pastors highlighted the challenges that they have been experiencing, all of them mentioned their experience with the COVID pandemic.

### **Practical**

The data in this study showed practical implications for the small Black church. The first practical foundation is that ministry starts with the minister. Furthermore, suppose the ministers do not take the time to deal truthfully with the external factors and experiences that affect them emotionally or mentally; in that case, they will struggle to be effective in ministry. One pastor said, “I always tell the truth.” Telling the truth or ministering out of a truthful place keeps each individual in a place where they do not have to remember what they said to each individual. If truth is the main flow of the minister, he/she does not have to worry about what they said to each person. The same pastor said that when you “lie,” you have to remember what you said to each individual.

Each church must be built on the foundation of truth. If the church operates by only sharing minimal information or keeping information from the congregation, eventually, that will cost the church a migration of members. The church needs authentic leaders. From Christian leadership, especially in the church, we have Jesus as our example (Sanders, 2019). The church leaders have the ultimate example as a leader – God in the flesh. The church has a perfect role model. If the church's leadership applies the teachings of Christ without compromise, the leaders will experience more peace in the decisions they make. Kessler and Kretschmar (2015)

concentrated their research on Christian leadership as a trans-disciplinary field of study. These authors carried to the table the critical discussion that Christian leadership is both theological and non-theological. Twenty-first-century leadership needs to focus this way. Church leadership uses these two disciplines structured to help bring genuine change.

### **Delimitations**

Delimitations of this study pertain to the design or method. This researcher chose phenomenology because it is a design that allows the interviewees' freedom to share their experiences. Phenomenology research attempts to uncover the truth by going beyond the subjective veil of human experience to the underlying, objectively true reality (Aagaard, J. (2017). Phenomenology offers the interviewees the opportunity to describe their experiences as they occurred without editorials.

One bias avoided in this research was to only sample pastors from the researcher's denomination. Another limitation was a small sample size due to pastors' schedules. It would take a more extended period to get on pastors' schedules to get a larger sample size. The study was carefully considered with the research methods and a deliberate design to focus on small Black churches. Because of this design, there are other limitations. For example, most of the participants consider themselves black or African American pastors. Also, the study only focused on small Black churches, two hundred members or less. The study did not include large Black churches of two hundred members or more.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

This research study allowed the pastors of small Black churches to share their experiences so that academia can know the struggles that they go through. Large churches have the financial resources to help them better navigate through the challenges that they experience.

Many small churches, on the other hand, sometimes do not. During the ongoing COVID pandemic, one participant shared that some churches he knows in New York did not make it and permanently closed their doors.

Future research on this topic could be with larger sample size. It will also benefit the study to include pastors who have permanently closed the doors of their churches due to the challenges they experienced. In addition, looking at how seminary-trained pastors dealt with the challenges compared to those not seminary trained. An additional question asking: If allowed to do ministry over would you do anything differently? This question allows pastors the opportunity to reflect on their experiences constructively. The participants in this study all found the study was significant to them.

### **Summary**

This research used a phenomenological study that opened the door to information that this researcher would not have been privy to. The participants in this study walked through chapters of their lives straight through the 21<sup>st</sup> century where they could share the climax to experiences and challenges that could be labeled – the good, the bad, and the devastating. A few pastors had a price to pay for the call of God on their lives. They learned to develop resilience, lead truthfully, and have a deep love for the ministry that they do for the Lord.

The more significant majority of this sample shared that the more devastating challenges came from individuals under their roof. The findings of this study provide theoretical, empirical, and practical data that will help give researchers and or pastors a foundation to build. Pastors can learn from examining the struggles these leaders encountered and observing how they could stand during a famine.

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## Appendix

### **Appendix A - Interview Questions**

1. How long have you been with this institution?
2. From your experience, what is a typical day working here?
3. From your experience, how do you deal with congregants who may have mental health issues?
4. Based on your experience, what are the most prosperous areas of your institution?
5. Can you describe the areas of ministry that need to improve and why?
6. From your experience, how are the members doing with biblical education / spiritual growth?
7. How would you describe the overall health of the congregants?
8. How would you describe the overall health of the leaders?
9. Tell me about your work experiences at this institution.
10. From your experience, how do you handle a crisis?
11. Could you describe the success of the institution over the past five years?
12. From your experience, compared to similar institutions, how well is this one doing?
13. How would you describe your emotional and mental state after dealing with challenges or conflicts?
14. From your experience, how have these challenges affected your family relationship - negative or positive?
15. From your experience, how have ministerial challenges affected the growth of the ministry - negative or positive?

16. Describe from your experience, how ministerial challenges affected the overall quality of family life.
17. From your experience, how has your leadership style affected your quality of life - negative or positive?

## Appendix B - Participants Interview Transcripts

### Participant A

Participant A serves as a senior pastor for over seventeen years for the Church of God in Christ denomination. He is a faithful husband and a loving father and grandfather to his almost thirty children and grandchildren. He is greatly respected by the members of his congregation and by the leaders of his denomination. After completing his military service in the United States Air Force, he returned to college in his dedication to the ministry. He completed his Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctoral degrees at Liberty University. His congregation moved to a new building through his leadership and paid off the mortgage in seven years.

*How long have you been with this institution?*

I have been with the Church of God in Christ for fifty-nine years. I have served as a pastor for seventeen years.

*From your experience, what is a typical day working here?*

A typical work day is providing spiritual guidance, leadership, direction, counseling, and other ministerial activities or duties on a weekly basis. I serve as a bi-vocational pastor, therefore, the duties I perform are after 5:00 PM Monday-Friday. My weekends are full-time.

*From your experience, how do you deal with congregants who may have mental health issues?*

The congregants who may have mental issues are given referrals to see a professional counselor if their current conditions is beyond my level of expertise.

*Based on your experience, what are the most prosperous areas of your institution?*

The most prosperous areas of this institution—I would have to say the financial support is phenomenal. The ministry purchased a new complex for \$510K in 2013. In the Spring of 2020,

the ministry became mortgage-free. The people have sown greatly into this work. For that, I am grateful.

*Can you describe the areas of ministry that need to improve and why?*

The area of this ministry that needs improvement is in building a better relationship with the men in the ministry. For some reason, this is the biggest challenge for me. Men can be prideful, self-willed, and untouchable. In ministry, humility makes all the difference to be relatable and engaging.

*From your experience, how are the members doing with biblical education / spiritual growth?*

The biblical education and studies for the ministry are commendable. The congregation attends two biblical study groups, a Young People Willing Workers study, and Sunday School. Both are for adults and children. The ministers, elders, and missionaries of the ministry share in this area of the work. I teach the Mid-week Bible Studies on Wednesday.

*How would you describe the overall spiritual and mental health of the congregants?*

The overall health of the congregation is sound, level, and grounded in the word of God. I believe in being sober, mature, and grounded in the word of God.

*How would you describe the overall spiritual and mental health of the leaders?*

The overall health of the leaders is acceptable. I don't want to take the approach that I am having an expectation of the leaders to be a certain way. However, I do want to challenge them and see growth in their work in the ministry.

*Tell me about your work experiences at this institution.*

My work experience is mainly administrative in tasking. There is some financial teaching I provide to have a congregation that knows the importance of being good stewards and financially sound in their giving from a biblical perspective.

*From your experience, how do you handle a crisis?*

How do I handle a crisis? When a crisis takes place, I began with prayer. I have to consult God to deal with the issue at hand. I also designed a room called: The Situation Room. It is here where all issues are laid out on the table to address, discuss, and have candid conversations to help reach a solution.

*Could you describe the success of the institution over the past five years?*

The ministry has had a very successful run. In the past five years: Growth of the ministry with new disciples. A mortgage-free ministry. On task to be a debt-free ministry with all credit card debts wiped clean. I have a slogan, train, equip and empower. This has really blossomed especially during the pandemic. The leaders have grown in their spirituality and it's noted in their character and personality.

*From your experience, compared to similar institutions, how well is this one doing?*

From looking at other ministries; we are doing exceptionally well. Good leadership, stewardship, prayer life, and heart towards God is important to maintain a successful ministry.

*How would you describe your emotional and mental state after dealing with challenges or conflicts?*

I have learned to exercise patience dealing with people. There are all types of behaviors in a ministry. Never take issues personally. Be honest, open, and the people will gain trust and respect. My overall mental health is at a level I am pleased handling conflict.

*From your experience, how have these challenges affected your family relationship - negative or positive?*

Overall the experience has been positive. My wife has stated she doesn't know how I deal with the people at times. A pastor must have a love and heart for people, period.

*From your experience, how have ministerial challenges affected the growth of the ministry - negative or positive?*

Positively. I take challenges to heart to find a way to overcome obstacles. Never allow a situation to stop progress. I model my ministry from the work of Nehemiah. I love his story.

*Describe from your experience, how ministerial challenges affected the overall quality of family life.*

Ministerial challenges can be affected when family life is involved. I experienced something once that caught me off guard dealing with a problematic member. This person tried me to the bitter end. One day while preparing for church he called me and upset my morning. My wife was in the room asking me who was I talking to and what was going on. I broke unexpectedly. I literally was shaken by the conversation and how I had to deal with this problem on a Sunday morning. This person left the ministry. I loved working along with him but there was a change of attitude where he lost the respect for me and became too familiar and common. I don't miss the drama.

*From your experience, how has your leadership style affected your quality of life let - negative or positive?*

My current leadership style has helped me tremendously. I have gained the trust, influence, and respect of those who are following me today. It took me adjusting and adapting to the voice and allowing God's Spirit to lead and take charge. I don't trust in my own thinking, or

my own thoughts. I am a believer in the scripture, “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not to thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him and he will direct your paths”. In closing, it has been a positive experience.

### **Participant B**

Participant B has served as the associate pastor for over eighteen years. He is a faithful husband and a loving father. He is a talented musician and artist in drawing and photography. He is also bilingual. He served as a musician in a sister church for about ten years before becoming a pastor in his current church. He also teaches adult Bible study weekly and heads and teams up with the intercessors for weekly prayer services. Many church members have testified how much they have learned and grown spiritually by being in this church.

*How long have you been with this institution?*

Since the beginning of 2008, fourteen years.

*From your experience, what is a typical day working here?*

We don't have a 9-5 daily workday. We have event-based days that last from one to four hours where we have our regular worship service on Sundays, bible study on Tuesdays and prayer on Thursdays, First Fridays, and Saturdays—each of where the senior pastor and/or I am on hand, and then noon day prayer Monday through Friday which the congregants call in.

*From your experience, how do you deal with congregants who may have mental health issues?*

We had only had a few. An issue is identified through a discussion with one or more of the elders or teachers who have worked with the congregant. Or if the individual displayed odd behavior through their interactions with others in service, (like once when while praying for

others, an individual began to shake the person she prayed for and yelled at them to have faith) the senior pastor or I would have a conversation with her.

We would recommend the person agree to submit to discipling from a mature congregant or an elder to help them study and apply the word of God to their lives. If that help is unproductive, then we recommend they work with an outside licensed counselor.

*Based on your experience, what are the most prosperous areas of your institution?*

Our teaching ministry is the most prosperous because we see results in the lives of those who apply those teachings. It occurs at minimum, every Sunday through the service and Tuesdays through Bible study. The people respond through their testimonies on the word after a sermon is given, or in the case of bible study, through their responses and application of the principles studied a week or more after the lesson. They come back for more, with proof that they were not just listening, but with application in their lives.

*Can you describe the areas of ministry that need to improve and why?*

Discipleship could be improved. Our active membership is under 50. We should be growing in numbers but when we do, we get occasional setbacks by disgruntled seekers looking for nothing more than a handout. They tend to cause a minor fallout when they leave.

Our outreach ministry could use improvement. There are a few members whose hearts burn for the lost, but none ever step up to even look into a ministry to reach people on the streets (or elsewhere) as a group. As individuals, some have reached out to others, and some of these people have become key to our membership.

Feeding the poor. We don't have a building but could probably either work alongside another ministry that does the same or develop relationships with local groups who feed the poor or something of that nature. There is talk about it but no one has shown a desire perhaps because

our membership is based on congregants from three different states which could make the practicality of living in one state, working in another and going to church in yet another more than once a week a problem.

Sunday school for elementary schoolers had disappeared but was recently restarted by one of the deacons and it needs to be sustained.

We have a mentorship ministry in place, but it is floundering due to lack of involvement of the mentor and/or the mentored. It needs to be restructured and given a restart because there is a real need for it.

Even during pre-COVID the worship team/music department had shrunk to a one-man band. No one has shown interest in joining a worship team or become skilled enough to play. It is a necessary ministry which cannot remain a one-man team. Again, distance and work make it difficult to come together to rehearse on a regular basis.

*From your experience, how are the members doing with biblical education / spiritual growth?*

I would say a third of the congregants attend the Zoom bible study. They participate because of their own desire to develop a meaningful walk with the LORD and they enjoy the experience. We give them breaks every few weeks since most of the adults have 9 to 5 jobs and families.

*How would you describe the overall spiritual and mental health of the congregants?*

Spiritually they get what they need from the ministry to prosper in the things of God but appropriating what they receive is another matter. The unadulterated word of God is given each week and affirmed by less than half of the congregants. We hear their response to that through their testimonies which are shared shortly after the word is given. Most churches don't do this,

but because we have a strong teaching ministry and we are small enough, we encourage the hearers to be more than just hearers but to testify about the word they just heard in a service. These same ones who testify each week, are prone to appropriate the word in their day-to-day lives and fruit is seen through their involvement in the ministry and in their personal lives. For this third to half, who are mostly adults and a few younger congregants, their spiritual lives show the fruit that the word says we ought to show: love, joy, peace, longsuffering and more. Praise our God, that's a good thing.

But the spiritual health of the silent majority remains doubtful. Why? A part of this silent group is involved in the ministry but show slower growth from the word they hear, the bible study they might attend and/or the prayer groups they may participate in. I like to see growth because it shows they are alive and responding to what is going on. The larger portion of this group, which is over half, remains silent and shows little to no growth in their lack of testimony, low participation in worship, lack of participation in any aspect of the ministry other than paying their tithes. They are not dead, just stunted, due, I believe, to disobedience and unbelief.

Mentally most of the congregants seem to be alert, able to process what they hear, and aware of what is required of them. For those who aren't, which I would estimate to be about half of our congregants, they don't grow in their walk because of wrong thinking. They have a "give-me mentality" that affects how they process the word they hear. It has left many who don't grow with a stubbornness and a hidden resistance to allowing God's word to change how they think. So mentally they don't grow as they ought to and so the cares of this world cloud their thinking which affects their spiritual health as well.

I find that the congregants who are mentally healthy are the ones who are not afraid of the change that God's word will bring to their lives, and they look to understand more of how it will

affect them for the good. We have a few congregants who have higher education, and while that education is no guarantee they are mentally healthy, they are alert and aware and know that more is required of them and are positioning themselves to do more. We have others who are not, and because they sometimes feel inadequate, put on a front that they will do, when secretly they will not.

We have a mentorship program (that is being rebooted) and some congregants were asked to participate as mentors, and they were assigned young people to mentor. Participation had waned to only a few because they were ill-equipped to minister to others because they still needed to renew their minds to flow in love with the brethren. I believe willingness is a state of the heart and the mind. Some were willing, but when they found out what was required, refused to commit to doing the work, and instead of being truthful about their unwillingness, continued under the presumption that they were doing something, when they were doing nothing at all. Eventually, all of what they did or didn't do, came to light and we had to revamp the program.

*How would you describe the overall spiritual and mental health of the leaders?*

I take that to mean the two pastors, the elders, the deacons and the teachers. Overall, I believe they position themselves to grow in God. They aren't all growing at the same rate, but they are growing. The pastors position and reposition themselves to be effective servants for the Lord. The elders and deacons fluctuate in their spiritual health. They say one thing but when called upon to act, are often at a loss or do something that shows they aren't in the position to be effective.

Case in point, recently when I called upon our intercessors to pray for their pastors. (This group just so happens to be made up of most of our elders and deacons). While they should be praying for leadership on a regular basis, when I called upon them to pray, they were confused. I gave

them what to pray for and they claimed to understand, but they stood together and didn't know how to proceed. One prayed but it went nowhere. They got their footing when a more mature member of the group, stepped in and by the spirit of God, not her own volition, knew exactly what to pray for and against and heaven opened. When she finished, the rest were still hesitant and eventually realized one more could pray and be done.

Mentally, they are coherent and on course to renew their minds with the word, but a few still battle with obedience to the word and the flow of the Spirit in the service. Case in point, one elder brings his comfort dog to service thinking it won't cause any harm because it's a small dog and has become an appendage to their family. But a church service is no place to bring pets, even well-behaved ones, because they become a stumbling block to the carnal minded and a reproach to the place where believers come to worship the King of Kings. Wrong thinking keeps him from seeing how his misguided actions affect the walk of others and his own effectiveness in doing what he is called upon to do for the service. We are a small church, but wrong thinking by even one person in leadership can impede the flow of the Spirit here as well.

*Tell me about your work experiences at this institution.*

I do it because I love the LORD and obey his directive to worship Him as well his directive to feed his sheep. It's been doable but at former times it was difficult to manage. The size of the congregation lends itself to what the head pastor and I can handle with our families and full-time jobs. While we don't operate on a 9 to 5 workday schedule, congregants fortunately don't give us many distress calls. I think having formed men and women fellowships has helped most congregants reach out and pray things through with each other. Preparing for worship service and the actual service are my biggest jobs. Even the word takes second to that and can be a major pull because I only bring the word directly once a month, in

addition to leading worship, and playing keyboard at every service. If I don't fully depend on the LORD, I feel like a one-man band. God always supplies but standing under the mantle to funnel the supply doesn't get easier with age. It's just doable.

I am the sole resident musician as well. That took a while to learn to handle, but I have no backup, so that used to be a tremendous burden for me, but I learned to stand up under it. God shows up, sometimes tremendously, on Sundays and all is right in the world. The preparation for worship service gets minor push back at home because of our shared living space with my wife and three sons and limited time alone to worship, while dealing with occasional family drama. Not having a worship team hasn't been as difficult as I thought it would be, but it does make a difference when you have others hungry for the Lord working with you. I lost my team a few years ago. Rehearsals weren't conducive to everyone's schedule and people's levels of maturity in the LORD showed through enough to interfere with ministering. Honestly, it's been a press to have to go it alone for so long. I sometimes fight off feeling helpless to reach even my own children at times with the importance of worship but have persevered anyway because I have to allow space and time for God to move and for them to respond to him.

Many congregants seem clueless on how to worship, even though we walk through how to week after week, month after month, year after year. I have an AME/Baptist/Pentecostal background and miss the exuberant worship I grew up in God with. I have had to modify delivery to congregants with a more formal (subdued) worship background. Still God always shows up, so I remain hopeful that the people will desire more one day.

I am concerned that we have no influx of seekers and while I can occasionally step in for the senior pastor with the word, which is still a heavy responsibility for me as the associate pastor,

along with handling finances and a stressful 9to5 job, playing keyboard and leading praise and worship every Sunday, there's no one in the wings waiting to be groomed for the job.

*From your experience, how do you handle a crisis?*

I have to assess that there actually IS a crisis. I have found it's usually been better to wait to respond instead of reacting to every issue that pops up. I pray for his guidance and then I go for a walk if I need to. I get away from everyone to be quiet and allow God to speak to me. Even if I would personally want to address the issue.

If it's a verbal attack, I've learned to not take it personally but realize it's the congregant's situation, attitude or issue that may need to be addressed. If they want to leave, or they feel wronged, I minister to them to prepare to do what they believe is right after they seek the LORD. We had one instance where a family member of a congregant (and a few congregants) took offense at my reference to untrained young women as wild heifers implying that they didn't want to apply themselves and just ran around playing in the field without a care. But they took it to mean I was name calling young women and referring to them as fat lazy women who sat around overeating, or some other negative slang reference attached to the heifer reference. They egged on other congregants to become incensed. I apologized publicly for the misunderstanding the next Sunday, but I realized their taken offense had more to do with their walk than a mistaken reference. And in spite of my apology, they remained offended.

After a crisis, I usually notify the senior pastor of what is happening or for advice on where to take things. Either way, he is always made aware of the goings-on and what action I took.

*Could you describe the success of the institution over the past five years?*

Financially, we are sound. We are a tithe paying ministry and we support a sister ministry in India and have been most of the time we've been in existence. I think those are the two biggest

successes. We are a congregation under fifty people, where most of the adults and young people with jobs, tithe.

Over the past five years, we have continued uninterrupted support of a mission ministry in India. We've helped them pay for schooling, buy land, build a Christian academy and provide food and shelter for their ministers to continue missionary work in other parts of India including along the border of China. We provided life giving funds during the last eighteen-month COVID epidemic.

*From your experience, compared to similar institutions, how well is this one doing?*

I don't know of any with the same structural base, congregant size, teaching or worship ministry. Also, I haven't had a lot of extra time to go visit or fellowship with other ministries. I'm up to minister every Sunday unless I'm on vacation. I do remember the ones I came from which just happen to be larger ministries. I believe we are doing better financially and overall, than many, regardless of their size and the fellowship here is healthier.

*How would you describe your emotional and mental state after dealing with challenges or conflicts?*

Fortunately, there aren't too many challenges.

Afterwards, it's a pull, so I feel drained but encouraged that God could fix the issue if I trust him and put the crisis in His hands and thank Him for helping me through it.

When a member decided she needed to leave, I welcomed the idea but told her she should find a church where the whole bible was preached. I was confident she would hear what God was telling her wherever she went because we didn't own her, and she was under no constraint to stay with us. She was a babe and needed to be *some* place she could receive the word of God. She was grateful I advised her by the spirit of God and months later returned.

*From your experience, how have these challenges affected your family relationship - negative or positive?*

The challenges haven't really affected my family because I keep them out of it (unless they are directly involved in the crisis).

There was a learning curve starting a new ministry. I had to deal with preparation more than challenges in addition to handling my family's affairs.

*From your experience, how have ministerial challenges affected the growth of the ministry - negative or positive?*

We give the unadulterated word of God and if they are seeking that, they stay and grow. If people come and aren't ready for that, they make a stink, they murmur and complain and cause confusion.

We've had people come to be part of the ministry, we appoint them to help, and then they turn on us by sharing confidential information with non-members who in turn incite confusion, and cause others to leave or to murmur over the word.

We've had others invite family members to attend, they receive the word, but because some members weren't secure in their walk with the LORD, caused babes to fall away because they thought the ministry had foundational issues because murmuring was being spewed by those close to leadership. We are praying for their growth and have finally begun to see change for the better.

Just because the number of congregants has increased is no guarantee that the ministry is growing. The increase of character of the parishioners is a better indicator.

*Describe from your experience, how ministerial challenges affected the overall quality of family life.*

I found that even though my wife was eventually won over to the ministry, and the part I played in it, I had to modulate how deep I got at home in order not to smother my kids with my ministerial responsibilities to the church. I allowed them to join sports teams or after school activities. I didn't always attend or participate but I didn't interfere with their participation either. They weren't the ones who had to minister or be prepared to do so. Even on vacation if I wasn't careful, the cares of preparation for ministry—especially in the early days, threatened to intrude even on my ability to get rest. It still does at times.

My wife came to understand the needs and pulls of working in the ministry for me to prepare for worship service or bring the word but only complained if it lasted all week. It was fortunate we didn't have multiple services during the week. I still had to have time with her and with our sons in some capacity and I was able to do that.

In the beginning of this ministry, I had to prepare to prepare because my musical ability on the keyboard wasn't on par with my ability to lead worship or sing or even bring the word on Sunday. So, I had to practice playing keyboard more, but my family consistently pulled me away from any dedicated practice. I could prepare to bring the word because my wife understood that. Otherwise, there was always something that needed to be done, or made, or fixed, or corrected, or travelled to or attended. My family eventually learned to adjust after a while. They realized this was part of who I was and called upon to do, and I was going to do it, and have time for them too.

Many times, though, the challenges of ministry and family life helped ground me. If it weren't for the ministry, I would be pulled into the unnecessities of suburban life that don't usually lead to spiritual growth but play to the flesh.

When I was part of a larger congregation, there were more people to shoulder the responsibility built into having to minister to others, but it was still a responsibility, and I was never one to be part of a ministry and do little more than attend services.

*From your experience, how has your leadership style affected your quality of life let - negative or positive?*

I don't think I've identified what my leadership style is. I'm not bossy or overbearing. I present options and encourage people to choose the right one so they don't have to go through hard times unnecessarily. I don't judge them if they don't take the option I present, but I will teach the biblical preference but step back to let them make their own choices and I later discuss the consequences of their actions.

### **Participant C**

Participant C has served as the senior pastor for over twenty-four years. He was married and is currently single. He grew up in the Church of God in Christ denomination and is presently pastoring an independent Pentecostal church. A Board of Elders governs his church, and he is one of the pastors in his state who submits to an Apostolic Pastoral leader in that state. He is not only respected by the congregants, but the local police and jail warden also respect him. He makes weekly visits to those who are incarcerated to encourage and minister to them spiritually. He is one of the full-time pastors who submitted to a low income for the first five years of the ministry until the church was financially able to increase his salary.

*How long have you been with this institution?*

New Life International Center. I have been there for twenty-four years.

*From your experience, what is a typical day working here?*

I would say it varies; it varies. I believe what I have noticed to be consistent in any day is my morning prayer, my word time, my study time seeking to be consistent with that. And I have gone to the church—still go to the church at six in the morning to pray. I might get up by five and start praying at home, but get to the church by six and read and pray. Pray for the members, prayer for myself, pray for the community, and then from there the issues vary. I have had some consistencies; for example, Tuesday and Thursdays have been typically, prior to COVID, my time to go into the Creek County jail to minister an hour and a half to two hours. On Wednesdays we go into the juvenile center to minister, but it can vary because ministry is so dynamic. The unexpectancy of someone going into the hospital that creates another aspect of your routine for the week. A death creates another situation. So, sometimes it varies. But a normal day/week has a kind of routine: devotion, study of the word, sermon preparation. And then in the week you got the time that you meet with your elders, you have your weekly elders meeting; I don't know if that is answering the question. Mondays are my sabbath, and then Tuesday through Fridays kind of be active. There is a lot of activity within the community over the years, so I would say it varies.

*From your experience, how do you deal with congregants who may have mental health issues?*

Well, we have had a few in our community who have mental health issues. And some have been members of the church; some are middle-aged members of the community. Some have been members of the church. Some have been middle-aged. Some have been teenagers. As a principle, we love them, affirm them, work with them. I spend a lot of time talking to them, listening to them—especially the men who may be going through, but for the most part, if they are in crisis, we refer them to agencies that can assist them, work with the families in regard to

that. We have the opportunity to go into those institutions and give them visits. So, we visit them when they are in the institution. A lot of time, Pastor Samuel, people with mental health issues have to want to go and get help, but most of the time they don't. So, these institutions kick in when they become a threat to themselves or a threat to others; so, when they get to that point, that is, when they are now taken to the institutions; so, we try to visit them as part of their therapy and support—especially if they are members of the church.

When we go into the jail, we have so many in the jail who have mental health issues, I would say that we need more counselors, more people that we can refer people to, so they are not being sent to the jail due to their mental health issues.

*Based on your experience, what are the most prosperous areas of your institution?*

I am thinking. I really believe our mission department is our strongest department of the church. We faithfully tithe. A tenth of our tithe and offerings go towards missions account. And we sow; we have been sowing all these years into four to five missions organizations. And, we have been able to get teams and go to Mexico; we have a Mexico missions trip scheduled in August. We kind of go twice a year to Mexico in August and in December. We are taking a team of youth to Los Angeles for Missions outreach out there, and we always connect with other churches when we are going to do that, so a lot of members and the teens they get all excited about getting in the car going somewhere. We have been to Africa; we have taken a couple of the members from the church with me. But that is one strong area, but I will say again when you talk about a 24-year period of ministry, and the dynamic of which ministry operates, you may see praise and worship the strongest areas in a season, then it goes through a decline. Then the youth are the strongest, then it goes through. Over a period of time, I have not seen anything

consistently strong except Missions. Everything goes through an up and down dynamic. Prayer has been strong; I should say the prayer ministry of the church is also prosperous.

*Can you describe the areas of ministry that need to improve and why?*

All of them. Which area needs to improve? I would think the strongest area in the years I have been pastoring that is the weakest is Evangelism, it's Evangelism. I feel as though people are so busy focused on jobs, and living, and life, and the American dream. The time that it takes to invest in outreach—I know it sounds contradictory that we are strong in missions in one area, and then weak in the local area of evangelism because it is kind of challenging to get people to embrace that their motive for being in church is to win souls to grow the church. There are other areas that need assistance, of course, in the church. Sometimes in the area of discipleship, you have a few that are faithful. But then you are looking at your larger members and they are not faithful, so you want to see an improvement in the saints engaging in the discipleship process, the learning process. You want to see more people volunteering because a small church cannot afford to pay a staff. So, the work that takes place in the church needs to take place through volunteers. And sometimes their expectation is the pastor is going to do all of that. So, you have a big challenge in that area.

*From your experience, how are the members doing with biblical education / spiritual growth?*

Again, the ones who are—let's say fifteen to twenty percent of the congregants are faithful, consist to Bible study and they are growing, and then the other eighty, eighty-five percent that are not engaging, they are not growing as much. So, there is a correlation between growth and engagement with education because we grow through studying of the word, and through fellowship, and through interaction. So, if your job or the other priorities of life causes

you not to engage, that for whatever reason, we can see that you are not growing ‘cause you are not getting what you need to grow. And some people feel comfortable with that all they need is Sunday morning service, that is all they need. So, I would love to be able to increase the percentage of the saints who are—would engage the discipleship process. COVID has not helped that situation. COVID has not helped because now Bible study and courses and classes have shifted from the building to online. You would think that online or on the phone would cause them to engage, but we lost some people. So, the number of people has decreased during COVID because they don’t want to get on the phone; they don’t want to get on the computer. And some don’t have computers. Some don’t have computers; I hope I am answering your question.

*How would you describe the overall spiritual and mental health of the congregants?*

I am in a unique environment where every community where you are is unique. And the community here is seventy percent in poverty. And amongst the African Americans—they only represent ten percent of the community—there has been a great deal of abuse. There has been a great deal of drug use. There has been a lot of incest. There has been a lot of just breakdown in terms of the family structure and order. So, all of those affect the congregants because they are products of the community. And so, when you are financially struggling and you are struggling with your family, those things are present. What we try to do is set an atmosphere of worship and the word to help heal spiritual and mental states – to encourage. In one season of the ministry, we partnered with a counselor who volunteered her time. She is a graduate of Oral Roberts University, and she had a counseling ministry, and she came and she partnered with the church and met with family units and counselled moms, single moms and worked with the kids. But it was for a season, I think she was here for 3 or 4 years, but then her husband lost his job, and she then had to take on more responsibility with another job that did not allow her to be here.

I feel personally, one of the weaknesses of the church is helping people with their mental issues that help with their spiritual issues is-counseling cost. And when you are in poverty and don't have the money, you don't have access to the counseling. And so, a community in poverty dealing with those issues don't always have the professional counseling that they need to overcome some of those issues. I pray over that all the time and am often looking for counselors who would be willing to volunteer time, but it is not easy to find that, not easy to find that. So many congregants are overcoming in that area. I noticed, Samuel, they are trying to walk with God, do what they need to do, but when the finances are not there, or if they are going through a crisis, it derails their spiritual focus. We try to teach them how to try to maintain as a way of protecting their mind. Keeping their mind on the Lord will keep you in perfect peace while you are going through. Sometimes there is an abandonment of the things they need to help them. We are trying to teach that to help navigate them through those situations. I do have a lot of people who have various issues to overcome while they try to walk out their faith.

*How would you describe the overall spiritual and mental health of the leaders?*

Exhausted. I rarely have to remind my leaders to take their sabbaths, to take their day of rest. And I pastorally try to discern when I see them exhausted and tired to decrease their workload or postpone a service to do something that will empower them to have some rest. Ministry, if full of work, is endless. Three funerals these past couple of weeks. And you got to do—the leaders are coming together to make sure we have food for the people. We got this; we got that; we got to do this; we got to do that. Then you have the meetings, then you have with the pastor, then they are doing all—they are keeping up with the finances and with the bookkeeping, and then—so, it is a lot. And, when you are a small church and you don't have a large staff, and they are all volunteers, and they work full-time jobs. So, these leaders, after they leave work, are

engaging the ministry, coupled with their regular jobs. So, it requires that the pastor is sensitive to that. I might not have been as sensitive when I was younger, but with wisdom and with time I realized, you got to give them a break. And try to create some recreational things that allow us to go and play. We haven't been able to do that during COVID, but you have to be thinking of ways to help the pastor as a leader along with your staff: How to not hurt ourselves. Cause, you can hurt yourself, you can hurt yourself in ministry because the demand is high, and the workload is heavy, the needs are great and you have to learn how to not be controlled by all of that and how to balance it, so that you are preserved. I do not want any of my leaders to become victims in their health or in their families due to the overworking that comes with ministry. So, those leaders who are married, I authorized them to disengage once or twice a week from Bible study, because some of their spouses are not in church. So, I need them to spend time with your husband, spend time with your husband. I don't need him to be mad at the pastor or at the church. Is that answering your question? (Yes it is.).

*Tell me about your work experiences at this institution.*

When you got your normal preaching, teaching, discipling responsibilities, funerals, weddings, administering, giving guidance and direction in the midst of crises with congregants with leaders, managing—there is a lot of involvement with the community—the community involvement. I am a part of the Ministerial Alliance. I serve as an officer in various capacities as Treasurer, as the President, I have just been reelected President again. So, there is a jack of all trades—as a small pastor, when my family comes, they say everybody in the town knows you. The police calls—I get phone calls from the police authorizing people to stay at the hotel if they are stranded in town. We have a program for that. And oh my—Pastor Parker can you give me a ride to Walmart. So, there is the taxi component to it. Giving rides, sometimes stranded people

come here and I will get somebody and we will drive them to the next town since there are greater resources in terms of the Salvation Army. It is a very comprehensive thing, a pastor's job, especially in a small church when you give yourself to it full-time like I have. It is a very comprehensive task managing all those responsibilities. Out of all the churches in Bristow that are small like myself, I am the only pastor that is full-time who has submitted to the income that the church can pay me. All the other pastors work full-time jobs. And so, their ability to give to the community is not in the say way as I do as a small pastor. So, there is a component with most small churches that the pastor is sustained by a full-time job and then he is limited to what he can put into the church to a certain degree because he is putting in forty hours. I made a decision to submit to what the church pays me and to live by faith and to give myself to the ministry for the people and/or the community these past twenty-four years.

*From your experience, how do you handle a crisis?*

And we have had many crises and the first thing that I would do is pray. I also have a pastor. I also always have someone over me to whom I am accountable. And I would also always seek council. So, I seek council. If we are in the midst of crises, I seek council. I have the privilege of meeting with that pastor and all of the pastors who are submitted to him on a monthly basis. So, I am not only connected to the one who I am mostly accountable to, but the relationship with the other pastors. I get to call them as well. I vent. You have to vent, so you have to vent. So, there are certain pastors I can call and vent with and express my frustrations with. And not feel—they are going to judge me; they know that I am called of God. There is a support system, so prayer, council, I think those are the main ways—venting.

*Could you describe the success of the institution over the past five years?*

I would say that our greatest success is that we are still open. We are still open; we have not shut the doors. I would say the greatest challenge in ministry in twenty-four years has probably been the last five years. Cause I have had to lose quality people. Many of which have passed on due to death. Some have relocated to other cities and states, and when you lose quality people, that affects the house. Our musician that we have raised up from a teenager to play our music has relocated to Atlanta, Georgia, and we haven't been able to find a musician since then. So, we are struggling a little bit in that area. I don't know how to play, but I would get on and pretend like I do. I would get on and create some form of worship. The budget is not of such where we can afford some of the musicians who we have found. They want to charge \$200 a week, \$300 a week. We are not there yet financially. And with losing people through relocation, you also lose income to the church. So, the past five years have not been so easy, but we are still standing; we are still preaching; we are still ministering; we are still touching lives; we are still engaging the community. We are keeping the faith. You mentioned—if I can go back to one of your questions. It asked what was prosperous. Somehow or another, through the past year, through COVID our finances have been the strongest. It has been more stable during the pandemic than it was anytime—all the twenty-four years. The year of the pandemic was the most stable year financially to the church. And our outreach increased because it forced me onto Facebook. And we went from me ministering to thirty, forty people to ministering to three to four hundred that are being reached through Facebook. So, the pandemic led to increasing the word and the outreach through Facebook live. And somehow or another the finances have been—over the past twenty-four years every year, I have suffered not getting paid certain periods of time, but I was paid the whole year of 2020 and 2021 thus far. Since COVID—praise Him;

hallelujah, in Jesus name. And that is not a lot—I am not getting paid a lot, but that creates a peace of mind knowing that you can pay your bills.

*From your experience, compared to similar institutions, how well is this one doing?*

We are—I hate to use the word better, but we are better than some and worst than others. We are probably in the middle somewhere. Some people have less members than we do. Some people have more members than we do. Some have—I guess the greatest asset that we have as a church is that I am available as a pastor to the congregants and to the community all week long. Whereas the other churches, as I mentioned earlier, they do not have pastors that are available in that regard. So, as a Black pastor, my presence is in the community all week long. That is not true for the other Black pastors or even White pastors who have small churches. So, my presence is on par with the pastors of the larger churches who are getting a salary, who have been to college. That is another uniqueness to me that out of all the other small churches, I am the only one seminarian trained. None of the other pastors are. I am the only seminarian trained pastors amongst the small churches. And Bristow has a population about 4,800 to 4,900 people and we have about forty churches and thirty-five of those churches are all small churches. If you actually compare our large churches to the mega-churches, all the churches in Bristow are small churches. So, there are some smaller than others. There is not a mega-church in this city. But the larger churches would be those like one hundred fifty to two hundred fifty to three hundred people. And the smaller churches—we have a small church with seven or eight people; so, it could range from seven or eight to fifty, sixty, seventy to a hundred. I could be very specific and say in my community that there are seven, seven small churches pastored by Black pastors, none of us have a hundred members each. If you combine all our members of all the Black churches, from the Black churches that are small, we would probably have a hundred to a hundred twenty-

five people with those seven churches. While I tried to encourage all the pastors to come together and start one church, there is a lot of ego which will not allow that to happen.

*How would you describe your emotional and mental state after dealing with challenges or conflicts?*

When I was younger, I was overwhelmed. When I first started, I was really overwhelmed. And I had to seek counseling, and I had to get counseling, literally counselors. I unfortunately suffered a divorce while pastoring that was unreal and very much emotionally unstabling. I kind of felt myself in a kind of claustrophobic state, but praying—the Holy Spirit instructed me to seek counsel and come out of isolation. And in doing so, I got help. I just think the key for pastors is staying connected with others. Just staying connected with others venting and having a support system through other ministers, pastors, family members and friends. That becomes a significant source to your mental state, your spiritual state and well-being. That support system that surrounds you, people in your corner encouraging you, affirming you, praying with you checking on you. Ministry can be—there is a lot—'cause there is spiritual warfare associated with it 'cause you are dealing with people and you are dealing with life. God is faithful if we humble ourselves and allow God to use others to help us. He would help us and bring us through. Get a message every now and again. I am thinking again about beginning yoga.

*From your experience, how have these challenges affected your family relationship - negative or positive?*

I am a unique pastor in that I am single. And I see myself—this context reminds me of the mission field. And sometimes, I am grateful and thankful that I am single because of what a family would have to go through, for example. The submission to my income, for example, you know maybe \$2,400.00 a month. It didn't start out that way; it was \$800.00 a month for the first

five years. And, it got raised to about \$2,400, and it has been that way. There have not been any more raises since that. I have been trusting the Lord, so if I was married and had kids, I see where that would be a challenge. From the mindset of a husband, you will be wanting to provide. It would probably shift my focus. I would probably give up the focus of the people and the ministry reaching the way that I am. And I would probably have to do something else that would empower me to provide for that family and create a situation where they were protected. So being single has been helpful in one regard to ministry in a missions context cause I feel like I am on the mission field in the context where I am doing ministry. My family, sometimes in Los Angeles, can be concerned about me. My mother, brothers and sisters, so I do contact them. I pray with my brothers and sisters every Tuesday, and I pray with my Mom and her siblings every Thursday. So that is connecting me with the family. It connects me; we talk, we share, we pray, so I have family connected with me, though we are out-of-state. We get online; we get on a conference call. So, twice a week I am connecting with family though we are far away. And we are talking scriptures; we are praying; we are interceding, and I am reassuring them I am okay—nothing for them to worry about—and their prayers, and support also help. There is no family with me in the whole state of Oklahoma.

*From your experience, how have ministerial challenges affected the growth of the ministry - negative or positive?*

Again, when you are here this long, ministry is dynamic. We have watched the church grow. We have ordained and licensed ministers in the ministry. We have trained them, equipped them; I have at one point had twelve elders on staff. So, I have seen the church grow. I have seen the praise and worship department strong. How to maintain that and gain momentum where you can continue going? I have not experienced that yet. What I have experienced is going up, going

up, and some element of warfare coming in, and then we had a decrease, and then you have to rebuild again. And then you build up again and there is another hit. And you're really trying to get to the place in the spirit and in prayer, how to abort the attacks where growth can be sustained. And sometimes the enemy can hit the pastor, and if the enemy hits the pastor, then the people will scatter. Sometimes it's the hit on the pastor; sometimes it's the hit on somebody else, or various hits. Over the course of twenty-four years, there have been so many different ways where we have seen the ministry decrease from a high place, but you just have to stay committed and be willing to start over again until the Lord releases you to your next assignment. And so, challenges are important because they are opportunities for your people to learn from to grow through, and so I have a core group of people who have sustained every challenge we have gone through, and you can see it in them—that having gone through those challenges—they are powerful people. They are strong people because they did not run. They stayed. Remained. They are my go-to people; that is why I am very protected of their state of mind and so forth, but they have remained.

*Describe from your experience, how ministerial challenges affected the overall quality of family life.*

We would say, I have not had any families or couples who have gotten divorced or anything like that; there may arise many challenges where I might be meeting with a husband and a wife, or the children and them, over an issue. We had one issue where a young lady, her daughter, allowed herself to go outside during church and get with a boy who she asked to meet her at the church. And unbeknown to us, they were kissing and making out on the church's property and got caught. And that created an opportunity for the church to minister to the girl and minister to the parents and assure them that we will put mechanisms in place to protect that from

happening again. So, the church ended up hiring security. We had no security prior to that. So that security now creates a sense of safety and security in the lives of the parents, in the lives of all of us that not only led to us getting a security officer, but it led to him giving us counsel. Cause he was in the military and one time he worked as a police officer. And he recommended getting a walkie-talkie in the back in case we had a shooter in the Church. We went to another level of overall safety with the counsel of this security guard; we keep all the doors locked except the front door during church. There are a whole lot of things we gained from that crisis that I would say overall benefitted the congregants and the family overall from that crisis. We are always working to make sure that our communication improves. So, sometimes if our communication is not up to par, it may create a crisis in a family. Where the parents might feel, for example, we have a lot of children who attend the church whose parents do not attend the church. And their faithfulness to church and giving their lives to the Lord, we are not willing to baptize them. We had to learn, since we got in trouble with one parent through lack of communication. "I did not tell my child to be baptized. I don't know about this child being baptized. How come he didn't come through us?" So, we had that blind spot due to the fact that the parents are not in church. So, for all the children and teenagers who want to be baptized, they have to get a parental slip. So, we will meet with the parents in the home, and if they approve, we will baptize them; and if they don't, we won't. So, we had to learn that sometimes the challenges became the opportunity for our growth because we could have blind spots. Certain procedural principals were not in place and it created a situation, and out of the situation came policy and procedures and increased communication styles, and there is a host of examples I can give in regard to that. Yes, challenges can help us to become a better church.

*From your experience, how has your leadership style affected your quality of life let - negative or positive?*

The pastor is evolving too. If I would go back twenty-four years when I was thirty, full of energy, full of strength, and ready to run and ready to go, I might not have been wise, but I was so young. And, I did not practice the sabbath for rest, so sometimes by not delegating and not resting, it opened the door for my health being attacked. And we had to step back; we realized you need to make some adjustments. I have secured twice a year going to a prayer retreat for three days. Three days in October, and three days in March, I would go to a place called God's House of Prayer and be alone with the Lord. That has helped as I have gotten older and more mature—delegating responsibility. Early when I started pastoring, I had this attitude that this is what we are going to do. I don't do that anymore. It is more now a pastor, elders get together, plan together, organize together. It should have been that way in the beginning, but it wasn't. And now it is a shared responsibility. I might have a final say on some things. By doing that, it is helping me. You want to have longevity in ministry. I allow the same Board to speak into my life as well as the pastor that is over me. They may ask me, "Pastor, are you drinking your water 'cause that is a weakness". I communicate those weaknesses; they stay on top of me to make sure that I am not getting dehydrated. I have been to the hospital three times for dehydration. "You are drinking your water, Pastor?" I am going to get some water once the interview is over. (Keep a case in your office). When your leadership style is you, and just you leading, that is negative. But when you share your leadership with others, it is positive. My leadership style has moved from negative to positive. I am still learning, still growing, still becoming. I think recently, I have identified another weakness in my leadership; it is in area of relationship. My temperament is that of a contemplator, and while I was a student at ORU, I scored the highest in my class as an

introvert. So, it is not my temperament nor nature to be engaging. It is not my strength. I am gaining insight as to how strong the relationship component plays in the area of ministry. So, I write down on my prayer list, Lord help me to become stronger relationally with my family, friends, members, and community. Because I can become very comfortable, I can go do my job and then move into me, myself and be fine. So, I am learning I got to do something to increase communication, engagement, association. If I see a big crowd coming, I am taking off. One-on-one, I am good. So, I am trying now in this season to conquer whatever that is that makes me take flight when that large crowd is gathering.

### **Participant D**

Participant D is a founder of her church and has been pastoring that church for over thirty-three years. In addition to pastoring, she was a school principal with the Department of Education in New York. Her school is located several blocks from the World Trade Center, and she, her staff, and students witnessed the entire incident, including the collapse of the buildings. She has a great passion for serving people. She has been married for over fifty-four years and has three children and grandchildren. Many ministers have gone out from her leadership and started ministries in other states. As an interviewee, she was candid and truthful in sharing any aspect of her ministerial challenges, including the personal ones,

*How long have you been with this institution?*

I am the founder of the church. I found the church on January 1, 1988. The church is now thirty-three years.

*From your experience, what is a typical day working here?*

There is no such thing as a typical day. There is no such thing as a typical church. As with all pastors, it is a twenty-four/seven days a week responsibility. I am not going to say a job;

it is a responsibility. And, so whether you have a calling while you are doing secular work as well as the work of the ministry, or whether you are just doing only ministry, you have to be on alert all the time to serve God's people.

*From your experience, how do you deal with congregants who may have mental health issues?*

Well, one of the things that we believe especially I would say in the minority community: We have a thing where we feel that there is a stigma in going and getting professional help. And so, although they would reach out to the church if they are going through some deep depression or what not; yes, we are able to provide spiritual counseling, but we do encourage them to get professional help. They do need professional counseling, whether or not it's something they feel is an addiction. People are addicted to a lot of things. Everybody always looks at drug addiction and alcohol addiction, but some people are addicted to other things. I found people addicted to shopping; you know? And so, now they are in deep debt and they don't know how to get up from under it. It is causing problems between the husband and the wife and really, it's an addiction that has to be broken. But people don't see mental health issues, only one way and they don't really want to talk about those issues. But I think that we are responsible to recognize what we cannot carry, what we cannot deliver people from, and that is in the sense that people actually need some serious professional help. That even though, like I have a Master's in Guidance and Counseling, but there are things that I am not trained to do with psychological issues. And you have to be honest within yourself as to what you can help and what you cannot do for your congregants. And so, when you are aware of these—and you really need to be able to be aware of the different flags, even those prompts that cause people to go into—have those different challenges—you have to be honest enough to say, “Okay, this is outside my sphere of support. I

can still support them spiritually, but at the same time, I can walk them through the process of getting the right kind of help and support that they need”.

*Based on your experience, what are the most prosperous areas of your institution?*

I think the most prosperous (area) of my church is knowing how to work as a team; that is so valuable, and I have said it to the church a number of times. When we have to get together, and we have to attack something as a theme—like if we have to give a family support when somebody dies in their family, when we have to go outside like on this Saturday when we have done the pantry support, (we have done that for fifteen years), whether it was when we went through Sandy or what we are going through now—we have never missed serving the community twice a month. And we hit that ground running as a team. And that to me is the most valuable—the outreach, and the outreach that is done as the result of team effort.

*Can you describe the areas of ministry that need to improve and why?*

I think the area that needs to improve is—and I guess we will really face it when we are coming in—is that commitment to not just have the remnant come in or the remnant give the church the level of support it needs financially, but also coming together for service on Sundays and especially prayer meetings. And I have found that is happening in large churches as well as small churches, but when it comes to prayer night only ten percent of the church will show up for prayer. And you really need everybody to be on that front line for that altar call. That to me is that area that needs to improve that when we do a call for prayer or a call for sacrificial worship or above the regular order or time for service that not just your remnant shows up, but that the entire congregation comes forward as well. And right now, with everybody being virtual for this year and a half, what we do is the first Sunday for the Lord’s Supper, we do come into the building. We do keep separate, but you still have those individuals that are concerned about who

was vaccinated. And we have been following CDC regulations the entire time, but I think that all of us, whether it is a big church or a small church, is going to have to work very diligently to get the whole congregation back into the building physically. Come back for that additional time of prayer without having to have a special speaker. You know? Or somebody else come that we don't just get so familiar with each other that we only come if there is someone unique or influential there.

*From your experience, how are the members doing with biblical education / spiritual growth?*

Well, I have found—once again; you have that remnant that has stayed focused with the teaching—because even with COVID we have Tuesday night Bible Study. We still have Sunday morning adult Bible class as well as Sunday School for the kids. But the growth for me is not measured in—the fact that we are able to continue the study and we have that remnant that continues to want the study—the growth for me has been the change I have seen in how people have handled difficulties in their lives. That is where I have seen that wonderful growth. When loved ones had died, when the money has gotten real funny, you know, when their children are not lining up the way they are supposed to be, how they have handled it, and standing on God's word, and seeing character being developed in individuals who used to be really wonky, but now, you know, you see that they are embracing the word of God and the counsel that you gave them. I have seen that growth and that has been a real blessing.

*How would you describe the overall spiritual and mental health of the congregants?*

Overall, I believe the church is doing well. And they are doing well enough that I have reached out to a community organization to allow the church to be used as a satellite site to provide support community support. Just a place where people can go and talk, just for a

listening ear, and then we serve as a point facilitating them to go to Winthrop Hospital, or go to Family and Children Services for the additional help. We have reached out to become part of those services. I guess individuals and programs are getting money from the ARP money from Biden and the American Rescue plan money, and so they are looking for people, but rather than just looking for people I am saying, let's find satellites sites. Because people would rather go to places that they are more familiar with. And I think that they would be more apt to go to a church or something that is going to be constantly be there rather than to go to a hospital location.

*How would you describe the overall spiritual and mental health of the leaders?*

Well, so far in all of us—and if you noticed the echo so far, I was just talking to my husband about this today—I think that we are doing well, but one of the things that we have realized is that we are so busy pushing self-care for everyone else that we forget to do self-care for ourselves. So, right now, I am talking to you from Georgia. And I have come down—God had blessed me with being able to build a house here ten years ago. And I was so rarely coming down—I call it the Eagle's Nest. It was supposed to be my place for refuge, rest, and restoration, and I opened it up to any pastor who wanted to come down for rest and restoration. I actually had made up my mind that I was going to sell it because I never get a chance to come down here. This is a seven-bedroom/five-bathroom house. And I never get a chance to come down here. So, I was going to sell it to a young man who grew up in our church with my children. He just finished a career in the military and retired. And I was coming down here just to do a closing. And right before—I was coming down on a Tuesday, that Friday all his paperwork for his prequalification fell through. Everything fell through; so, I say I am coming down there, anyway. I have not been in the house for a year and a half. I have not been there for long, let me just go for some self-care. I walk through the door and everything in this house just screamed, “Mama

you are home. Welcome home”. I can hear the Holy Spirit so clearly saying, “This is the blessing that God has given to you. You need to take the time to rest in it”. And so, I reached out to him and said. “Listen, I can’t sell this house, I just can’t. I have to use this for self-care”. And the blessing of it is they opened up the sub-division where they are building fifteen more houses, and I said, “If you like the location, if you like the design of the house, once you get your paper work straight, they are building other houses, they are going to be smaller than this monstrosity. They will be smaller than this and you can still get your life going”. He is in a good place; I am in a good place; so, I have been down here for ten days. And I said that I am going to have to make a concerted effort for self-care, and I did get Bishop Bivens—I got him to come down before; he loved it. And I said, “Yes, God gave this to us”. We have to take the time, not to tell others to take care of themselves, but we have to take the time for self-care.

*Tell me about your work experiences at this institution.*

Well, you know, as I said I am the founder of the church, so it started in my living room and I have just seen how God has provided as we were like nomads moving from place to place. Every place that we end up going to, God spiritually opened the door, and there were years where I have seen it where people would not even take money from us just to support the ministry. As a matter of fact, we were going to build a house; I mean a house of worship from the ground up, sent the money in for a prefab building, and the plans got lost at the plant. In the meantime, I went to a prayer meeting—we started worshiping outside on the grounds that it was supposed to be built on. And when the fall came, and I said to God we have to prepare to move the people indoors, and they still can’t find our plans. And this was a well-known, well-established organization. And they could not understand why they could not find our plans. And anyway, the Lord said to go to Hempstead, where we are right now. And we did go to where God

told us to go. And then God said this is where you are going to be. And I said Lord, “I just spent six years and seventy-five thousand dollars getting this building”. God said, “This is where you are to be”. So, we went to this building, and the building was in such bad shape that contractors were telling us to walk away from it, but I said, “I can’t. This is where God told us to go”. When I reached out to the company, they said, “Good news; we found all your plans. We already started working on your project; your kit is sealed, and the foundation will start going down in October”. I said, “Well, too late. God is telling us that we have to go somewhere else”. That gentleman, I never met him to this day. I have never met him. He said to me, “Pastor, if you tell me that God told you to walk away from this, I believe you. And I am going to make sure we give you every dime of your money back”. They did not penalize us even though they started on the project. They have given it all back, and we have seen that over and over again. Where God guides, He provides. And over and over I mean testimony after testimony that building is like four times what we were going to build. And we owe nothing on the building. The building has been debt-free. Since the day we closed on that building, it has been debt-free. When we had it—when we did have it appraised, it was appraised at two million dollars. We ended up paying a million one for it, and it is debt-free. And we are a small church and we have only done what God told us to do: tithes and offering. We did not sell no fish sandwiches; we did not rape the sheep. We did what God told us to do, and we just got the assessment for the building from the town, and the building is now assessed at \$4.5 million.

*From your experience, how do you handle a crisis?*

Be still and know... You know. I do mean that seriously. I just don’t mean that just because the scripture says, “God says be still and know that I am God”. You have to be still. As a matter of fact, in addition to being a pastor of a small church, I was a sitting principal on 9/11.

My school was right on the other side of the Brooklyn Bridge. We watched the building—our school is located in a place where we saw the planes hit the towers and even in that you had to be still. God has given—there is a grace covering that comes with those pastors that are called—not the ones that came running. I am talking about the ones who are called—God gives that “grace covering”. When He has called you to do something, He equips you with everything that you need with to go through whatever He has attached to that assignment. So, I can tell you there is a grace covering. I was so deadly calm during that day; it has amazed me. I’ve become—there are time I had to do funerals for people’s babies. Individuals that just suffered so much. I can’t even begin to tell you. But God has given us some hard assignments but with those assignments, but with those assignment have come the grace covering to lead his people through. And I remember that right after 9/11, we had to get all of the kids out of the building safely. We had parents coming in all panicking. We were able to deal with them at the door to keep it from coming in the building. And on that day, they did not end school earlier—that is the New York city public school; they never closed and they never ended earlier. We were able to get everybody out of the building, everybody home safely. Even though the bus and the trains all stopped running that day. Even though there were no cell phones. We still got everybody where they were supposed to go. But it wasn’t until the kids came back and the Board had us do a fire drill. And when we did a fire drill, everybody took it seriously. And it wasn’t until we got back into the building that was the first time I felt the weight of the responsibility. Because it was over a thousand kids and one thousand adults in that building. And that is the same weight you carry into a church. Whether you have twenty members or a thousand members, one hundred members, that is that weight of responsibility. You are not there (just) to lead them in worship, you are responsible for their very lives. You know? Yeah

*Could you describe the success of the institution over the past five years?*

As I say, there is an apostolic call on my life. And so, to me, an apostle—and a church that carries an apostolic calling—is able to trust and move people and things forward. So, I thank God that as I look at the leadership that is going forward, I look at the fact that there are a number of people that through their relationship with the church and through myself, have come looking for jobs and found careers. There are a number of people who have come—that were in other careers and found new careers and are successful where they have been counseled and mentored into. And they are doing extremely well. There are a number of them in other areas of the country—as a matter of fact, during women’s month, we had an altar call of service where we did not have one sister who was—that was preaching that day; that wasn’t either a leader in their current church or a pastor that was in New York. Everybody was—one from Vegas, one from Virginia, one was from New Jersey; we had Baltimore; we had Texas. We had them that have now spread across this nation who are still in either pastoring or in a spiritual leadership position where they are. That was really good; that was really good; so, you see the growth that way.

*From your experience, compared to similar institutions, how well is this one doing?*

I think in comparison to other church sizes, the number of people—I think we are doing extremely well. Is all—like I say—some are “called” and some “come running”. And so, when you say in comparison, I am looking at mixing the “called” and “come running,” together. But, the fact that I have seen people with larger congregations come in and I was really surprised like the size of the church, about the work of the food pantry, about the kind of outreach that we provide—even the training—they were kind of surprised why you were looking to do NCAA

training for athletes. I say, “Because too many of our young male athletes do not know the differences between a D1, D2, or D3 schools, and they don’t know what courses they are supposed to take so that they could get a good scholarship and not end up red-shirted”. When you start talking to other pastors like that, they don’t look for that kind of stuff. They have to understand that I think that our church does the overall reach out looking at the whole life of the individual, not just the spiritual life. So, in that aspect, I know that we are doing much better because we are looking to develop the whole person and not just the spiritual aspect of the person.

*How would you describe your emotional and mental state after dealing with challenges or conflicts?*

I can tell you that the Lord has equipped me with being a fighter—even a fighter against myself. You know, I stand on Isaiah 41:10 and God tells me not to fear. He is not only my God. He is going to strengthen me. He is going to help me, and He is going to uphold me. Do we have those moments where we feel really broken? Yes, we do have those moments. One thing God has taught me. He has taught me to relish those times and celebrate who he is as my way maker, and not depend on myself and you know, thoroughly depend on him. And I know it’s a gift. It’s the gift of faith, you know? And yeah, like coming down here—I needed this. I needed this and when I realized that I almost gave it away... I came down here to give it away. I mean, this house is six thousand square feet. I was going to leave seventy percent of the furniture here, so that he could have a good start. I mean I almost gave it away, and God said, “No, this is what I gave to you to help restore you and keep you in the place that you need to be”. You know, I thank God that He does that for me. He does that for me. And every pastor needs that self-care. We have to stop thinking that we are supermen, ‘cause we are not.

*From your experience, how have these challenges affected your family relationship - negative or positive?*

Well, let me tell you something; my daughter said something to me that I never considered. That being with the school, being with the church, I always had my kids with me. And even when we did outreach for the school kids or whatever, I always took them with me. As an adult, my daughter said to me, “Mom, we were always there, but we were not always with you. We always felt we had to share you”. And I never saw it that way. I felt that as long as they were with me—as long as I took them on every trip—you know. I would not work for the D.O.E. during the summer because I felt that I was working so hard during the year. And even with my grandson, (my husband and I were his custodial parents, and he is incarcerated now), and I am saying, “Everything you could check off for a child, we did that”. And so, when we asked him, “Why? What was it? What made you become the prodigal?” And one of the things that he said to us was, “When I was in middle school you were my principal. In the community, you were my pastor; and I wanted to be accepted by my peers in the community. So, I had to prove to them that I wasn’t a softy”. So, he ended up rebelling and going into the street and adopting the street life to prove that he wasn’t a softy. So, in that aspect it has affected my grandson. And my daughter was the one that shared that information with me. And then, if you are a high achiever, the children tend to think that they are competing against this legacy that you guys have left, and I don’t want to do that. You know, I don’t want to do that. I don’t want to do that. And then I let them know that I didn’t want to do that either, that when God calls you, you just have to go. One of the things I say to the congregation, “I am very transparent: God is going to save my household. He promised to save my household, and on this side of the dirt, I am going to see

them—you know, all of them”; we all pray; we all believe in God, but there is a level of commitment that they have all pulled back from because they have seen how hard it is. They have seen the level of work and the sacrifice that has to be given. So, I think that all three of them—even the grandson that is in jail, have pulled back from that level of leadership because they know true ministry is a great, great sacrifice. And they don’t want it. They don’t want to make that level of sacrifice.

*From your experience, how have ministerial challenges affected the growth of the ministry - negative or positive?*

Well, I think because I am transparent about it, it hasn’t affected it negatively because it allowed me to share how important it is for quality time with family. It allowed me to be very transparent about the correctional system, and it can impact the entire family, not just the individual. So, I don’t think that it impacted the church negatively. Because for most parts many of them have been with us close to the beginning, if not the beginning of the church, so they know what we have poured in, so it let them know no matter how much you pour in, you still have to try to be careful and cautious about this other kind of support that these children need.

*Describe from your experience, how ministerial challenges affected the overall quality of family life.*

I think as far as the quality of family life—I think that sometimes we will put that face on that all is well and that we are pushing forward, but on the inside, there is that disappointment because you know what the potential was, you know what could have been. And so, although you could sit around the table, I have these family meals where we sit around the table, we talk, we laugh and what have you, but as we go forward and go our individual ways, I feel that they are not as close. The uncles would say your grandparents did not deserve what you have taken

them through because we also know what they have given to you. And so, there is this—I don't, you know, I don't ever have the word to describe it. But it causes—not a dysfunction, but an imbalance of true family relationship. In there because not only are they disappointed in that person not reaching their potential, but they also feel that it is not fair what we are going through because of how much we have poured into our grandson, you know.

*From your experience, how has your leadership style affected your quality of life let - negative or positive?*

Well, I am going to say because I am very transparent. I shoot from the hip. What is positive about it? I don't have to try to remember what I said. I know what I said because I told you the truth the first time. I don't have to remember what part of this I revealed because if I am going to tell it I am going to tell it like it is. So, that in itself is a blessing to me. I think that it is also a blessing to the congregation because I am not ashamed to declare—my husband and I have been married fifth two year and I am able to say to them how much I love my husband the things I will do for my husband as far as cooking and serving and support. Sometimes the sisters don't like it because the brothers would say, “See, see, Pastor is doing it, how come you can't do it?” But the point is being opened and being honest, and you are telling people that you can't just expect to be loved, you got to sow what you want to reap. So, I think that that transparency has helped the church as well as helped me because I am held accountable for what I am openly declare I am doing. So even when I get kind of um um um and don't feel like it, I am still going to go forward if he says that he wants chicken and fish for dinner that's what he is going to get. Whether I have to feel like going to fish market or not, that is what I am going to do because I love him.

**Participant E**

Participant E is also co-founder of her church and has been pastoring that church for over thirty-seven years. She was first a co-pastor and later became the senior pastor. Participant E is another one of the pastors who was extremely honest and truthful in sharing all aspects of her religious experiences, including the close and personal challenges. The former senior pastor of the church divorced her and married one of the singers in the church. They have one daughter together who is not in ministry with her. She is a survivor who went through many difficult years after her divorce. She is an excellent minister and has a great heart for God's people. Her church is doing well and has increased financially during the pandemic.

*How long have you been with this institution?*

I have been with the church for the past thirty-seven years. First as First Lady, then as Administrator and now as Senior pastor .

*From your experience, what is a typical day working here?*

Since we do not have an office, my office is in the home. My typical day is answering the phone, talking to people, and returning calls, and studying.

*From your experience, how do you deal with congregants who may have mental health issues?*

I have not had that experience because no one has expressed that they (had) a need in their family. However, in my conversations with a few members I can tell that there is something wrong.

*Based on your experience, what are the most prosperous areas of your institution?*

Our prosperous area is working in the community. We have two big outreaches a year. Last year, we had a coat outreach. And this past Saturday, we just had another outreach which

was very successful. Dealing with the community, working in the community, and letting the community know that we are there if they need us.

*Can you describe the areas of ministry that need to improve and why?*

Communication. I feel that pastors and those in the community do not communicate well with each other. We think that we all have the Holy Spirit, but the Holy Spirit speaks to us differently. I find that many of them instead of telling you what is wrong would use cliches like, “I am blessed and highly favored”. But by communicating with them you find out that is not true. I remember this happened to me with one of our very good members. She said that she was fine and we kept talking, then I asked her to tell me exactly what was wrong, and she started crying. I feel that communication is one of our biggest problems, not only with our congregants, but also pastors. Pastors don’t communicate; pastors don’t talk. To be honest with you, we don’t tell each other the truth. I find that this was a big problem. At a conference in New York, they asked me how many people I had in the congregation. It seems that they (only) want to know how many people I have in the congregation. It seems that they (only) want to know how many people we are ministering to. I always say I minister to those who come every Sunday, not to those who are on the books. Many people are on the books, but we have faithfully thirty-five to forty people that come every Sunday. Those are the ones I minister to. I think that we are not honest with each other. We are trying to let the others know that I have more people than you. It is not about how many people you have. But, I feel that communication is our biggest problem.

*From your experience, how are the members doing with biblical education / spiritual growth?*

This is a big one. And the reason I say that is because when we were in person, we had fifteen to twenty people coming out for Bible study. Since we been on Zoom, we have eleven. I

said what happened. I thought the whole congregation would be on Zoom for bible study. But that was not so. I had to put in my mind that, “hey, they don’t want it”. However, I have been teaching Survey of the Bible since January, and I have eleven people who come on faithfully and they are growing. I will not put anyone in leadership unless they have some biblical knowledge. We have to know the word of God to be able to minister to people. So, I say that those eleven people are growing; some people say that “I study on my own,” but you also need someone to guide you.

*How would you describe the overall spiritual and mental health of the congregants?*

I would say that overall spiritual growth is good. But I feel that our emotional health is not good. I have a couple in our church who feel that someone is after her husband. She saw the person talking to her husband and it blew up for three years because she thought that I should have sat these two people down and I should have been more involved. The young lady was asking her husband some questions because her husband had a stroke and the young lady, and her husband were friends. I felt that it was a personal thing between a husband and wife, and I was not going to get involved. She said that she could not follow my leadership and she left the church. That is why I feel that we are not emotionally healthy, and things have gone on in our lives that we are not emotionally healed from – even in our childhood. A lot of things that we do was according to how we were brought up. And sadly, to say they were not all good. That is the way our parents brought us up—the best way they knew how—and it has carried on. So, I think that we need more emotional healing or emotional health teaching in the church. Because when we are not emotionally healthy, our view of God is even different. It affects our view of God.

*How would you describe the overall spiritual and mental health of the leaders?*

I think our leaders, they are healthy. Spiritual they are healthy. I would say that there is always room for improvement. So, yeah I feel that overall, they are healthy. But I also found that when you have to put people in leadership and you think that you are doing the right thing, I think some people are in the wrong seat. And I think that when you are in the wrong seat, you can't function well. So, I will have to remove some people and put them in the right seat. When some people are in the wrong seat, then you have to move them and put them in the right seat.

*Tell me about your work experiences at this institution.*

Well, I started working in the church when I was sixteen at my old church, Zion Baptist Church. I started working as a Sunday School Teacher, and then as a superintendent. And I worked as a trustee, (on) the board of trustees. But at this church I work in the Women's ministry, also as the Administrator, and Associate Pastor, but now I am the Senior Pastor. And I feel that I have worked in almost every department except Ushering.

*From your experience, how do you handle a crisis?*

It all depends on what kind of crisis. Just a spiritual crisis, I would counsel them on the Word of God. The main crisis that I have dealt with is when people are sick. And all that they want to hear is: "I am going to get well" or "their loved one is going to get well." But when the person expires, you feel bad about it, and they feel bad about it. It makes them look at God in a different way. But, I always counsel them from what the word of God says. I can only give you what the word of God says. You can only receive it or don't receive it.

I had a personal crisis when my ex-husband divorced me. That whole situation was a crisis, and for the longest, at least a year, I could not... when I walked into the church, people would not speak to me. So after, I asked them, "What? Why didn't you speak to me?" And they said, "Because we were hurting also, and because we were hurting, we didn't know what to say to

you.” I am so thankful that I was introduced to Vanessa, a counselor, and she walked me through the pain; and if it was not for Vanessa and the Lord, I would have lost my mind. It was devastating. That was a crisis with me. I withdrew. And every time I walked into the church I would cry. This went on every Sunday; I would be crying. But one day, I said to God, “This is the last day I am going to cry over this situation. It is behind me, and it is done.” I was set free that day, and you know what? I have not cried over that situation since, and that has been over seventeen years. I am free from it—so free that I don’t even think about my ex-husband. And I said to God, “That is not right. I have a daughter with him, but, I do not even think about him.” But one of the church’s former members died and they asked him [my ex-husband] to minister at the funeral. He did not show up because the car that they sent him left—he was not downstairs when the car showed up, and they did not wait for him. Then they called me, and I am thinking, “What are you all calling me for? I don’t know.” I got about four phone calls from them, and I wanted to know why (they) were calling me. They should be calling his wife. Anything they want to know about my ex-husband, they call me. That bothers me, but I am polite. I would tell them, “You should call his daughter; she would be able to tell you more about her father.” But you know, we don’t even talk about him. Sometimes, I think that something may be wrong with my daughter; she don’t even talk about her father. There are times she would say to me that she is going to spend the day with (her) father, or “I am going to church today with my father”. But to sit down and talk, he does not come up in our conversation.

A crisis that I am dealing with right now is I have a very sick sister who has cancer. And with my family, we try to protect people because we would say that we are okay. Like she will be in the hospital getting blood and she would say that she is getting stronger every day. That is something that I am dealing with in this particular moment, and I am just asking God to give me

strength because everybody in my family is looking to me for answers. They are looking to me to be strong for them. I can't be weak, because I don't have nobody to fall on but God. They would call me and ask me, "How is she doing? Have you heard from her today?" I would think, "She has a phone. Why don't you call her and find out?"

*Could you describe the success of the institution over the past five years?*

I would say that our success is our unity. Those who have been there for the last five years have grown spiritually; they have even grown in their finances. I have also seen their growth in their prayer life. I have seen some who did not want to pray in public. Now you ask them to pray and they don't even want to stop. For the past year with COVID, our success—believe it or not—has been in the area of our finances, and I give my daughter credit for that because she put us on Push-pay. People can go in anytime and pay their tithe. Most of the people are paying their tithe electronically. Most people are saying to me that this is perfect. First of all, we are not in the church and I don't have to mail it in; all I have to do is go online and pay my tithe. We have seen such a growth that a couple of our people during this pandemic have purchased houses. So, I have seen the success in that area.

*From your experience, compared to similar institutions, how well is this one doing?*

Not good when it comes to getting new members. I see and I do not like to compare us to other places. I see from others it seems like they are getting new members, they are getting new people. I see why we are not getting new members. We are a loving church and everything, but I realized that they are getting new members because of what they are teaching. You see, our people have itching ears. And if you are teaching in our church—our church would be full if I am teaching the prosperity message, that everybody is going to get a car and everybody is going to get a house. But that is not the message that God has given me, and I have to stick to the

message that (he) has given me. And the other one is, we don't have our own building; we have to share the place. We have an eight o'clock service and they are not fixing what needs to be fixed; and they are not allowing us to do too much. Now we cannot go back into the building unless they fix what needs to be fixed. Now we cannot go back into the building unless they say that we can. And they have to do some work before they can go back into the building. First of all, young people do not want to go to church at eight o'clock in the morning.

*How would you describe your emotional and mental state after dealing with challenges or conflicts?*

I feel fine. The only time I do feel a little - according to my personality, (is) sometimes when a person dies, and they are going through—this bothers me. I feel that my mental state is good. And one thing I know, I have to stay in the right relationship in the Lord because He is the only one—whatever I am going through—He can pull me through. And I can always find comfort in His words. So, I know that I have to stay in a right relationship with Him and totally depend upon Him to walk me through whatever I am going through.

*From your experience, how have these challenges affected your family relationship - negative or positive?*

I think they have affected my relationship positively with my daughter. In the beginning when all of what happened with me and my husband, my daughter went and got married and did not tell anyone. Just two of her friends knew. He did not have and she didn't have a job. I knew that it was not going to last. Not even a year later, she called and says "Ma, I want to come home." I said, "Sure. You and Mike want to come home?" She said, "No, just me". So, when she came home, she said, "I am getting a divorce". So, I said, "Girl, that is the best thing that could have ever happened. I will give you the money to get this divorce." And she said to me,

“Ma, when I got married, I did not tell you. I did not tell Dad. I did not tell nobody.” She said, Now I want to get out of it. I am going to do it myself”. She worked so hard that summer and got her divorce. To me, that was growth on her part. Now she helps me in the ministry with praise and worship. I let her really do a lot with the music part, even with technology. I don’t know anything about it, so I let those who know do it. She has grown; she is an excellent speaker. She is going to school now; she is going to Nyack College. She has been on the Dean’s list twice and gotten a couple of scholarships. She has grown in a lot of areas. She had to grow up quickly in a sense.

*From your experience, how have ministerial challenges affected the growth of the ministry - negative or positive?*

(What) the challenges negatively (affect) is our time. Our worship time is from eight am to ten-thirty am. We have to be out of the sanctuary by 10:30. That is a strain because when we have a speaker, we usually go over. With me I have scheduled myself. I have timed myself to make sure that I don’t speak no more than thirty to forty minutes, and that is a negative. A positive side is we can do everything that we need to do in two and a half hours. I don’t have that many challenges. If we had a bigger congregation maybe it would be a little more challenging, but right now, no.

*Describe from your experience, how ministerial challenges affected the overall quality of family life.*

When my ex-husband left, it was challenging because the church board said that I could not stay in the house. There was no pay. And they told me I had to give up my car. And I understood, but it was a financial challenge for a while. It was a challenge for me to come back to Brooklyn. I thank God I had my co-op to come back to, but it was challenging because we do

not have as much room as we had before, so that was challenging. But through it all, I thank God that I did have some place to come back to. I remember complaining to my mom and she said to me, “By you complaining, it shows that you are not grateful.” She said, ‘Be grateful that you were not abused; be grateful for your life; just be grateful to God.’ So, I always look at now, whatever happens to me or doesn’t happen. I say, “It is only by the grace of God. It is only by the grace of God. It is only by the grace of God I am here. It is only by the grace of God I am in my right mind.”

*From your experience, how has your leadership style affected your quality of life let - negative or positive?*

My leadership style, I believe in a negative way. Sometimes, as being a female, they don’t take you as seriously as if I was a male. Just last week I receive a not-so-nice letter. And my daughter says, “Ma, you know if you were a male, they would have never written you that letter.” The negative part, I think that I am too sympathetic and that can be negative. And I say that because, we are trying to save money to buy or get a building. So ever since I became Senior Pastor, I have not taken a salary from my church. I don’t get a salary, but they have done some things for me that I am very grateful for, so I look at that as being a positive. My leadership style, I always say that I will never ask my church to do anything for me personally, which some people say is not good, but that is just the way I lead. And I feel because of my leadership style, I treat everybody the same. I respect them all the same. What I do for one, I would do for the other.

### **Participant F**

Participant F is the founder of his church. He was in ministry for over a decade before he was called to start a ministry in Brooklyn, New York, and has been pastoring there for over

twenty-four years. He is married and has three children who are doing exceptionally well, and all have leadership roles in their community: medical doctor, school principal, and pastor. His wife is an educator and an adjunct professor in one of the colleges in New York. Participant F is also a director of the number one Christian rehabilitation program funded by the city in the entire state of New York. He has been instrumental in helping to establish and worked to gain funding from the City of New York for that historical program for over two decades.

*How long have you been with this institution?*

I have been pastoring for twenty-four to thirty-five years. Eleven years I was an Associate pastor before I started the church in Brooklyn, New York.

*From your experience, what is a typical day working here?*

For me, since I have been primarily a bi-vocation pastor, it has been quite challenging. When you talk about a typical day, depending on weekend and weekday; it varies.

*From your experience, how do you deal with congregants who may have mental health issues?*

Because my background has been in mental health, we would definitely refer. We will kind of ascertain what the challenges are, and we would try to assist and make referral to the appropriate kind of resources: assessment, therapist, what have you.

*Based on your experience, what are the most prosperous areas of your institution?*

Well prayer, our focus, our primary focus, is to develop the church as a house of prayer.

*Can you describe the areas of ministry that need to improve and why?*

No question: Administration, I guess. Why? Administration and being able to serve people and position the church for a more sense of excellence.

*From your experience, how are the members doing with biblical education / spiritual growth?*

In the light of this last year and a half, we started, primarily, we turned our entire focus into corporate prayer, spiritual growth. I would say, March 15, 2020, when COVID really started here in New York, I was reading Psalm 55 and David said morning, noon, and evening, we would cry out to you. We started a prayer meeting three times a day Monday through Friday. Monday through Friday: 6 am, 12 noon, and 6 pm. We prayed as a church for over a year and a half. And I mean the growth of the members praying five days a week plus Wednesday night Bible study and Sunday service.

*How would you describe the overall spiritual and mental health of the congregants?*

I would describe the mental health, the emotional health, as quite stable overall. We have been teaching, and we have been preparing the congregation on emotional healthy spirituality. Peter Scazzero's teaching on emotional healthy spirituality, discipleship, and leadership. I embrace that entire aspect of attempting to develop an emotionally stable believer. So, I would say pretty stable.

*How would you describe the overall spiritual and mental health of the leaders?*

As I said, one of the challenges that I said, leaders are often very spiritual, but not necessarily emotionally balanced. So, this challenge of being able to develop leadership that is based on emotionally healthy stability. Well I would say it depends on the days, times and situations, having good days, having bad days. I directed a drug treatment facility of one hundred clients and thirty staff members while pastoring. So, if you are talking about just the church because to be quite honest with you, I believe that one of the real challenges of pastoring a small church is your time is divided between the spirituality and just kind of making a living.

*Tell me about your work experiences at this institution.*

Well, my background has been in psychology and sociology in college. I was involved with a school in Brooklyn called Community Bible Institute. So, for about fifteen years I was an Associate Pastor of a church in Manhattan called Living Word Christian Center, and from Living Word, we started Sword of the Spirit. I have not attained a degree from Bible College, so, my experience has been: I have taken classes, a lot of self-thought.

*From your experience, how do you handle a crisis?*

Well, my background has been in psychology and sociology in college. I was involved with a school in Brooklyn called Community Bible Institute. So, for about fifteen years I was an Associate Pastor of a church in Manhattan called Living Word Christian Center, and from Living Word, we started Sword of the Spirit. I have not attained a degree from Bible College, so, my experience has been: I have taken classes, a lot of self-thought.

*Could you describe the success of the institution over the past five years?* Success in the last five years? I could look at what we just came through in the last year and a half. I have talked to several ministers whose churches did not make it through this because of members, and the church itself could not handle not being in a building. We have grown during this time. Our resources have grown membership has grown. As I said, we have been praying with each other for over a year and a half and to be quite honest with you, that is where we have seen the hand of God. My members have been spared, my members recovered, none of my members have passed. Many of our members have bought new homes and gotten new jobs and have prospered. We have seen testimonies of increase even during this time of famine.

*From your experience, compared to similar institutions, how well is this one doing?*

I refuse to compare. I refuse to compete. I think that is the challenge of being able to be single focused, single-minded: that I am not making comparisons. Even Paul talked about it. Paul talked about not comparing us with ourselves. So, I really tried to live in that because outside of that there is a whole lot of frustration, personally, I mean.

*How would you describe your emotional and mental state after dealing with challenges or conflicts?*

It depends. I do believe if you are going to be effective—we deal with real traumatic stuff, counseling someone, grief counseling. Walking through this entire period with COVID has been quite traumatic, so, I try to make an attempt to take heed to myself. I try to take care of myself. I believe in self-care more than anything else, more than ministry, of life, is that we must take care of ourselves. In fact, dealing with the crisis, the most important aspect of the crisis is self-care. And so, that has been my focus personally, Samuel. Just going through as we have aged as we continue in ministry to continually check up on how I am doing.

*From your experience, how have these challenges affected your family relationship - negative or positive?*

Because of having being involved for so long in ministry and seeing so many of my peers have challenges with their families, I made a quality decision when we started that our family would be first, not the church, not the members, not the ministry, but my relationship with my wife, my relationship with my children would be first and foremost. And God has blessed us amazingly, all three of the kids are leaders in the church ministering life, stable, love God, love each other, love us. You know, my youngest daughter Sarah is an attending physician in the Emergency Room at St. Barnabas's Hospital First Responder, loves God, ministers the word.

My son Matthew, the youngest, he is my assistant pastor. His grasp for the ministry, and my daughter Rachel is an Assistant Principal at the number one high school in New York called P Tech. They are doing well. God has blessed us. My wife and I have been married for forty years. My wife, a couple of years ago, obtained her doctorate. She is now an adjunct professor at one of the area's colleges here. As I have said, we put family first. I did not put ministry first.

*From your experience, how have ministerial challenges affected the growth of the ministry - negative or positive?*

I believe that me being a bi-vocational minister has affected the lack of growth in my church. Because my reality is, you know, you don't have energy for everything. You know, I realize that leading a program that is the faith-based Christian program that is licensed by the State of New York (it is the only one in the entire state), and I have led this group for the past 20-plus years, and my church suffered. Come on. Who has the energy to do both equally and as effectively? And I had to admit that, you know, the church suffered. But I believed that I was in the will of God leading this secular agency. You know, so when we talk about success, you know, you have to look at success from a different perspective. I had to train myself not to get so caught up, when I did not see the numbers, when we did not see some outward appearance of success. I had to look at the whole picture, you know, of effectiveness. Are we effective in what we are planting? In what we are doing? Are we effective? Samuel, all the kids in our church have graduated from college. We have made every kid who was a member of our church, who has graduated from high school and showed us an entrance into college or secondary school, we gave them a scholarship. And if they graduated from college, we sowed seed into them. We wanted to support their success and their stability and education. We have a congregation that is small, but professional people.

*Describe from your experience, how ministerial challenges affected the overall quality of family life.*

As I said, the quality of my family life. How it has affected it? Quite positively. We put the family first. We attempted to balance the church, the members. (Not) like the ministers who live in the parsonage—no good. So, we have put boundaries around our family, boundaries around the growth of the children, so that the church would not have a negative effect. Too many ministers have lost their families, have been not good examples. Their children have been not good examples. And we tried to, as I said ministry starts at home with me and my wife, me and my children. It is not the pulpit; it is the family.

*From your experience, how has your leadership style affected your quality of life let - negative or positive?*

I think my leadership style, I have been challenged by it. I have been challenged, and I tried to adjust and grow as the church has evolved. The question, how has my leadership style affected my quality of life, negative and positive? I would say negatively, I think that times of being honest and trying to maintain a standard of truth, I think it has hindered the growth of the church. If I had ministered from a—you know there are different styles of ministry. Because I have operated in a prophetic trust, I have seen how, you know, through manipulation, through all kinds of things, could bring all kinds of results, but I refused to manipulate. I refuse, you know, to promote or project certain patterns that seem to be success driven. I know today, church has become very user friendly, very corporate in its understanding of how, and I kind of felt that I could not necessarily adapt or adopt to that kind of stuff. I am sure it has caused the church to suffer as a result of it. You know? Yeah.

## Participant G

Participant G is the founder of his church. He was in ministry as a youth pastor before starting his church over twelve years ago. He is married and has two children. He is currently pursuing a Ph.D. Since his church started, his congregation hasve grown and had to move to another building. He shared that many men are attracted to the church. A high percentage of young people (ages twenties and thirties) make up the majority of the church. He says they are now praying that the Lord will send more women to the church. In addition, the church grew, and their finances increased during the pandemic while they were online. They went back to the in-person service on July 1.

*How long have you been with this institution?*

I have been with my church for twelve years this month.

*From your experience, what is a typical day working here?*

A typical day. A typical Sunday: Wake up. Spend time with the Lord. Usually, I already have my message together. I have meditated on it. I get up and pray a little bit and worship. Then I get the kids ready, take the dog out. I commute to my church which is about an hour away from where I live. The church did not start that way. We moved to the city that the church was founded in, and our congregation changed. Most of the people were coming from Central Jersey, so we ended up moving the church to Central Jersey to serve the people better. And my wife and I, we commute. A typical day is getting the family together, taking the dog out, getting my notes, getting my computer, getting my iPad. We drive an hour there. We usually put on some good gospel music, or something that the kids could enjoy, some gospel music that the kids could enjoy. We get there—I usually get there around nine. Church starts at ten, so at 9:30, usually it is prayer. So, I usually go in my office for about ten to fifteen minutes and pray. The

young man who serves as my Armor Bearer usually meets me there and prays with me, and to see if I need anything. And then we would go into the prayer. We would be praying for about thirty minutes, then we would do praise and worship for about twenty to thirty minutes. We spend that time worshiping God, praising God. Then we go right into the Word. I preach usually for forty-five minutes to an hour to an hour fifteen. I don't do that typically at other churches. I usually preach for forty minutes, but at my church I take my time. I usually preach for an hour, and then give the opportunity for people to come to Christ. Then we have announcements and offering. Then we have the benediction and everybody goes home. I go home if I don't have counseling or anything going on. When I come home, we usually get something to eat and drive home. We spend that time resting with the family. Usually, we try to consecrate Sunday, the Lord's day, to the Lord. We typically try not do or look at anything that is not Christ-centered such as movies. We would look at Christian movies or Veggie Tales. We would have family worship later on after dinner where we spend time praying laying hands on the kids, giving them a lesson, and then towards the end of the night, we usually let them have their devices.

*From your experience, how do you deal with congregants who may have mental health issues?*

We usually just love on them as they are. If it really gets out of hand, usually we have therapists inside the congregation, so, if it is something that needs to be addressed, we will encourage them to go to a therapist, or go find one for themselves. We recommend Christian therapists, Christian counseling, but we do not do anything there because we are not equipped, except for praying for them and giving them spiritual advice. We have a list of people that we are in partnership with—Christian counselors—that we would recommend.

*Based on your experience, what are the most prosperous areas of your institution?*

Prosperous areas would be the week-by-week teaching. Strong, strong teaching ministry, a lot of times the people would join the church because of the strong teaching ministry. I say that because, whether it is myself, my wife or other ministers, it is the teaching. People come and they get understanding and they are pretty excited and they seem to grow. This has sustained us over the years. People are excited about learning—becoming a disciple—what it means to be a disciple following God. So, I say that teaching is number one.

*Can you describe the areas of ministry that need to improve and why?*

I say that two, three areas that need to improve would be: improve children's ministry, music ministry, and outreach (evangelism).

Children's ministry. We have an older lady who is overseeing the children's ministry. She is really, really, really good. She is teaching with a heart for the children. She is sixty-five and she is in school now getting equipped to serve the children better, but she has been doing children's ministry for a very long time. The reason why that area needs help because there is a lack of—I don't want to say age because age really doesn't have anything to do with it. It is just the mindset of her not understanding growing with the times and learning how to implement technology—implementing things that would help to enhance what she is doing and to better equip her. I have been working with her trying to help her to think about leadership, and duplicating herself, and understanding that she does not have to do everything herself, but she could utilize – sometimes what she would do is different from what I have envisioned for the children's ministry, and she would come to me with problems instead of being self-directed. I'm trying to help her think about children's ministry in a new way. What would work for her when she was doing it twenty or thirty years ago may not necessarily work for her now. Not the work, the methods. That is one.

The other area I mentioned was music ministry. At one point, prior to the fact that our music ministry is really strong, really, really strong. And a couple of our band members moved to other churches or we redirected the Music Director (MD) to another area. We kind of let him go from that area because it is hard to deal with him as far as his style of leadership. A lot of people have complained about him. We had given him chances upon chances. We have a wonderful minister of music who is wonderful. He could sing better than anybody you could put on the streaming service or CD. But I think that because of the pandemic, (prior to the pandemic things were better) but the pandemic has revealed that we had to let that one individual go. The other music guy had to move to another church because he got married. So, that area is in need of musicians who are willing to play not for a gig, but play for the Lord. We do compensate our musicians, and we will continue to do that, but we do not want to hire hireling—People just there to be playing because they need money. When money gets involved, it becomes more than just ministry. It becomes a job. It was and it is a job. Black churches from my experience, have had this challenge of musicians. We want our music to sound great, but sometimes we do it at the expense of the culture of the church. And so, the reason why it needs to improve in that area is because we need musicians mainly who are dedicated and committed to the vision of the church and not just having a gig – skillful musicians.

And the last area is evangelism. We are in a highly Hispanic area, and we have tried to do outreach, giving out clothing and food, looking for ways to engage the community, but it has not been successful. And we are really needing help and some wisdom to reach the community. Most of the people, I would say all of our people that go to the church, do not belong to the community. So, our church does not reflect that community. It reflects people from all over the world. All over the central Jersey area, but not necessarily that community. We did not

necessarily go there because of the community; we went there because there was a building available to us. And we have tried to engage the community, but we haven't been able to crack the code.

*From your experience, how are the members doing with biblical education / spiritual growth?*

I believe they are doing good—not necessarily great, but good. We do have small groups; we do have bible study outside of Sunday morning. And time to time we will have like seminars that the members can come and grow through Christian education. They are very well versed in scriptures. They know what they believe and why they believe what they are living that out as I can see it. Not everyone, of course. The majority of them are attempting to live for Jesus daily and weekly, and they also have prayer ministry. Women have prayer ministry on Saturday mornings. It is a time of prayer but it is also a time of discipleship because they are learning how to pray. And that might be a significant amount of women on that call. And they look forward to it every week. We have suspended it for a season or two and they were crying about it, and now we have it back. They look forward to prayer and learning how to pray and be effective in prayers. But I would say that the Christian education they are learning, applying, they show up with notebooks. We—usually, when we do seminars and different things, we have a workbook where they can work through stuff. We use one a curriculum where we just go through scriptures: who is this God that we serve – everything from trinity to triune God, as well as the person and work of Jesus, the person and work of the Holy Spirit, understanding the creation, the fall, redemption, how to study the scriptures, how to pray, the character of God. They are very hungry very eager to learn and to apply. And they are actually doing that. You talk to them,

about different things they will not necessarily give you a scripture but they will give you the application of the scripture.

*How would you describe the overall spiritual and mental health of the congregants?*

The overall spiritual and mental health of the congregants I would say is pretty good. We do have a few as I said, we do have a few who are challenged mentally. I said we have a few who are challenged mentally. They are in therapy now. I don't know necessarily know what exactly they are talking about. But they would check in with my wife and I to say, "I am doing good", or "I am not having a great day". But overall people tend to say that prayer ministry has been good to them and good I am not having a day, but overall people tend to say, especially the women, that prayer ministry has been good to them. When the men meet together, they express what is going on in their lives – their stress or whatever. But they have been in a good spot. We usually do men and women in different small groups. Sometimes we do it together where we are thinking about manhood and womanhood, and our particular role and responsibilities. It is just a place where they can express. So, they have expressed in both the women and the men's group how they are doing well. They tend to have the help that they need. Spiritually they seem to be full of joy despite circumstance. Some of them got COVID in the midst of this pandemic and they had a really positive attitude about it. They did not complain. The church gave towards them. We were looking for ways to give them food, but they said, "We are good". The church overall was excited about serving God and serving each other.

*How would you describe the overall spiritual and mental health of the leaders?*

I say that a few leaders are burnt out—not from ministry, but dealing with the pandemic. One lost his job, and he is trying to start his own business. He is at Liberty getting his degree. He and his wife seem to be having some challenges. He is probably the one who is burnt out, and

we do have another lady who seems to be overwhelmed with responsibilities, not at the church per se, but with life. When you go and say, “Hey, why don’t you just focus on personal things and they would be quick”. She would say, “No, no”. But I am not trying to hold her back, I am trying to give her some space. That is a couple of them. Again, dealing with the pandemic has been really challenging for some of our leaders. Not that it has not been challenging for anyone else. I am very mindful of their time. Our church is probably laid back more than it should be because I don’t put pressure on people to show up. I don’t put pressure on the leaders—you have to do this, you have to do that. But I think that if they were to go to some other churches that I used to be a part of they would probably not be walking with God right now. They cannot handle this amount of pressure at this level. I think it is because most of the people in leadership have children under ten years old. I think that most of the leaders have children under ten including myself (except for the children’s director). Navigating that and also navigating through the culture of the world pushing pride month, pushing same sex stuff, and trying to navigate and deal with their own kids, and I think that is where the mental health may be challenging and the spiritual. But this is just really trying to navigate through that as well as, I have a sense of calling to leadership and learning how to balance and be effective in all realms.

*Tell me about your work experiences at this institution.*

I have been—when I first became senior pastor, I was still apart of another church. I had been with the other church for about ten years as youth pastor full time. I navigated between both churches. I was at my current church for about a year and a half while dealing with the vision of another church which made it pretty difficult to build. So, I left the church my income was coming from. I left that to come to a church where they were not at a place to give me anything. So, I went through a season where I volunteered for many, many, many, many years. I just

became full-time this year in February. But it is not like anything has changed financially. I do not get anything from the church. Financially, I get everything that I get from partners, friends and family members who are partners with the church, who give specifically for the purpose of me being fulltime—if that makes sense. So, my salary, that I receive now, that I received for many years, let's say ten years. We have partners that give on a regular basis every month, weekly, yearly, for the purpose of me being fulltime. And so, for this year in February, I was fulltime where I am able to give myself over to the vision. So, working at the church, most of the years, I have volunteered. So, this year now, I am receiving a salary. Our partnership has increased therefore it gives me the ability to give myself freely over to the church.

*From your experience, how do you handle a crisis?*

First thing I do I spend some time praying, praying in other tongues, seeking the Lord for wisdom and guidance. But before I go and make a decision and respond out of emotions or out of the flesh, I spend time in prayer. It may be an hour or two. It depends on how crucial or how bad is the crisis. Thinking, if I have some time, I will spend that time, if I don't have that time, at least, I will take that time to pray even if it is fifteen or twenty minutes before I respond. Then I will assess the situation trying to look at all sides of it, and within the leadership of the church, I will bring it before our elders or ministers—bouncing things off of them. We may call an emergency meeting. And if it seems to be too challenging within my scope of leadership and the people I server along with. I will reach out to mentors and spiritual leaders of my wife and I personally, and I will reach out and talk and pick their brains and ask for their wisdom and their guidance when it comes to that particular crisis. I will reach out to about two of them. I have at least ten people that I can reach out to and pull on them. I do not go to all ten of them. When you start going to three and four people, “What do you think? What do you think?” You still have to

hear from God, and when you have three or four different thoughts, I will be confused after I walk away from all of them. I usually pray and ask God who should I go to.

*Could you describe the success of the institution over the past five years?*

We have reached where a lot of churches are looking for younger people. We have been praying for older people because our church is full of millennials. Now millennials and men are drawn to our church. I am actually praying for women now, for women to come to our church. We don't have a lot of women, but I am asking for more women. Most churches that I know are full of women and older saints, middle aged. And most of my congregants are in their 20s, 30s, yeah in their 20s and 30s. So, I am seeking. I guess the success would be, we have the ability to draw men. And we have the ability to draw younger people. They are drawn to us, there is nothing that I am doing unique that I think that I am doing. I know that on Sundays, we try to get involved. I know we try to get involved in discipleship. We have the ability to help people grow spiritually. When people come to our church, when they leave, they will know the Lord better. They will know what they believe better; their faith will be strengthened. They will know how to witness; they will know how to pray for people. They will know how to be a faithful member. The success would be discipleship. The result is having more men at our church. Our membership is up.

*From your experience, compared to similar institutions, how well is this one doing?*

I would say that we are at a greater advantage. We have gained members in the midst of COVID. We have outgrown our current building; We were growing before COVID. But COVID has made us more visible online. We are doing better than churches our size. The giving has been great. The giving has tripled since COVID. We are growing. We are getting people

giving. They are giving online. People we don't even know. And people are inquiring about membership.

*How would you describe your emotional and mental state after dealing with challenges or conflicts?*

It can be draining. And you know it is a time when you recognize that you need to regroup. When I recognize that, I take a sabbatical. I take a month off where I do not preach. The ministers are able to take over and they will run and facilitate the worship service and preach. And in a couple of years, I will take six months to a year off, 2023, I will take six months to a year off. I recognize that when I come to that place, I need to take some time off and regroup. This year I did three months and the church actually grew.

*From your experience, how have these challenges affected your family relationship - negative or positive?*

Positive, it has drawn me closer to my wife in the midst of challenges. We draw closer. We talk it out; we think it out. We are going to a retreat on Monday. We go every year to a retreat to be ministered to as a couple. As a family, the whole family is going. The kids will be ministered to also. We have used challenges as an opportunity to get closer to each other and closer to God.

*From your experience, how have ministerial challenges affected the growth of the ministry - negative or positive?*

Negatively, when different ministers have been familiar, extra familiar with my wife and I, it bleeds across their leadership. And there have been attempts to be division because of that particular leader. So, that is the negative side of it, but when that person is removed, if they need to be removed, it has caused us to grow. We recognized where we are missing it, where we need

to improve as leaders. But when I recognized that a leader is toxic, they don't need to be there. We will work with them, as long as they are willing to be worked with. But if they made up their minds that they are going to hold on to a mindset that is poisonous to our church, we will remove them from leadership and give them less and less responsibilities and talk with them and prayer with them, and direct them. I have even asked people if they need to leave. "Have you thought about leaving since you are so unhappy?" I don't try to hold on to anybody at the church. If they want to go, we bless them. Sometimes we take up an offering and send them on their way and point them to another church that they can grow from. But we never try to hold on to anybody. We are willing – people don't want to leave, sometimes they fight leaving when God is dealing with them about leaving. "You can leave, it is okay. We are going to grow." Every time a person left, God has sent us two or three other good workers. If we find a leader who is strong-willed and poisonous in the culture of the church, we have talked to them and tried to work with them as long as possible. And if things don't change, we have to remove them.

*Describe from your experience, how ministerial challenges affected the overall quality of family life.*

My personal family life. It actually drew us closer. Like I said, we use the opportunity when we have challenges to get closer to each other and God. So, as long as home is in order, everything else lines up. But when home is not in order, I rather lose the ability to minister than to lose my family. We, both my wife and I, have the mindset that we will leave ministry before we allow that to destroy our marriage, our family. Our kids, will not have what used to be the PK status in the sense that Father, Mom chose the church over us. But we let them know that they are number one. What we do is just affirm our children, affirm our children, we affirm each

other, love on each other, and make each other priority. We refuse to allow ministry or challenges in ministry to destroy our family

*From your experience, how has your leadership style affected your quality of life let - negative or positive?*

My leadership style has caused me to prosper in the quality of my life because people tend to join the church because I strive to empower them to do what they were created to do. So, my leadership style is one of teams, and empowering everyone out there and put them to work, and helping them to discover the gifts and the talents and to release them into what God has called them to (do). So, the quality of my life, it has brought me joy. My leadership style is to work in teams, and to help them to utilize the gift and talents that God has placed in their lives.

### **Participant H**

Participant H is the pastor of a small Church of God in Christ church. He has been in the church most of his life. He has served in that denomination in every area before moving on to be the church's senior pastor for the past eleven years. He is a dedicated pastor and is devoted to serving God's people. He is also a VET of the United States Armed. He is married with two grown boys. His wife also served in the military. He holds a Ph.D. from Liberty University.

*How long have you been with this institution?*

I have been a pastor with the church for eleven years, but totally with the church for seventeen years.

*From your experience, what is a typical day working here?*

A typical day? I am different, I am out and about on the street. I am not evangelizing or anything of that nature but just doing day to day ministry with people before I got my courage up.

*From your experience, how do you deal with congregants who may have mental health issues?*

I typically refer them to the experts. I know my skillsets.

*Based on your experience, what are the most prosperous areas of your institution?*

I would say outreach. Any type of outreach.

*Can you describe the areas of ministry that need to improve and why?*

I would say for my church it is the area of evangelism. I think it is more so in this day and age, people are reluctant to just approach people and invade their privacy. So, people are just kind of reluctant to go and just approach people—safety concerns.

*From your experience, how are the members doing with biblical education / spiritual growth?*

I would say that fifty percent of them are doing well, but the other fifty percent, I can lead them to the water, but I can't make them drink it.

*How would you describe the overall spiritual and mental health of the congregants?*

I would describe them, overall, I have to look at the majority right now pretty much as babes in Christ. I don't know if that is a good enough description for you. They need more maturity in their Christian walk. I would say that seventy percent of them lack academic prowess: the ability to read scripture and then comprehend and apply. It causes me to teach a certain way. I would say that twenty percent of them are at poverty financially and economic sense. And at a spiritual sense: seven percent.

*How would you describe the overall spiritual and mental health of the leaders?*

I would say—I use a scale like: poor, good, excellent, outstanding – I would say excellent.

*Tell me about your work experiences at this institution.*

My work experience at the church: I was the minister of music; I was a janitor; I was the chief financial officer; I was a teacher, associate pastor, senior pastor, kitchen staff, and all others.

*From your experience, how do you handle a crisis?*

I am pretty level-headed. I am not one to panic. It is all because of my trust and my faith.. So, I go in with a level head because if I am in a panicky mode, I can't think straight. That is typically how I go at a crisis.

*Could you describe the success of the institution over the past five years?* Very subjective, how would you describe success? I will define it from a spiritual standpoint as far as we were successful in staying focus on pleasing God. I would say we are very successful. If I can explain, my whole focus on teaching when I teach my folks, our focus should be on God and not how to appease each other. From that stand point, myself along with my leadership team, we are very successful in preaching that consistent message. If it means that we only have twenty people or fifty people, we are okay with that because what is most important is what is pleasing and acceptable in God sight. If I look at it from man's stand point as far as numbers then I may not be successful—if I look at it from their stand point—because we only have a small congregation.

*From your experience, compared to similar institutions, how well is this one doing?*

I think that we are doing very well with the folks that I have. We have a heart for God and a heart for people. And we seem to be very in sync with each other when it comes to doing ministry from that stand point. And I realize how blessed I am when I talk to other people.

*How would you describe your emotional and mental state after dealing with challenges or conflicts?*

How would I describe it? I would describe it today as healthy. But when I look back it was challenging, emotionally challenging. But I think over the years, God has definitely used those challenges to mature me to where I am at today. There is still room to grow. I can honestly look back and see the good, the bad, and the not so good.

And okay I could have done that better, so, right now I am in a better place. Emotionally, I think I was a mess because again I was comparing myself against worldly standards and was becoming depressed over it because I was not doing this, doing that. But now, “let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, oh Lord”.

*From your experience, how have these challenges affected your family relationship - negative or positive?*

It affected my relationship with my wife in a negative way because I was all about ministry helping church folks. Not realizing at the time my wife was my primary ministry. I was expecting her to walk side-by-side with me. But I guess she felt that I was cheating on her with the church. I could not understand how she would think that; I thought she would be willing to help like I was helping. But, I guess I forgot the fact that she was a woman who has her own personal needs. They were spiritual, but not church spiritual. That is how it affected. I enjoy doing ministry as far as helping people, I still do. But, I had just had to manage it better.

*From your experience, how have ministerial challenges affected the growth of the ministry - negative or positive?*

It has affected us; well that is a good question. I had some folks, from the ministerial standpoint, who came up with some different theological beliefs, and they would try to force that

on the church, and I had to step in and stop it quickly because it caused some people to leave, which was fine, but it could be looked at—I am losing people—that is a negative, but I looked at it as a positive because unity in the body of Christ is very important to me. I just believe that God is not a God of confusion. So, that was my challenge. So, it was negative and positive; it all depends on how you want to look at it. Now if I rephrase the question, I could also look at it: there were times when most of my key workers were bi-vocational and you could not have them doing certain things in the church because they had other jobs, other responsibilities. So, to be able to have a church operating eight hours a day is really impossible. That was a challenge for me because I trying to do youth ministry and I do not have anybody who could do it, because they are working; that was difficult. It still is difficult.

*Describe from your experience, how ministerial challenges affected the overall quality of family life.*

When I started pastoring my kids were grown and off to school. So that worked out pretty good. They were doing their own thing. The only impact would be on my wife. If I can throw this in there, I am very mindful of the importance of work, life, Church balance. And so, I make sure I don't impose anything on my people that is going to affect those areas, or throw those areas out of whack. So, if it means that I only see you down at this church once or twice a week, so be it. We are not going to be here seven days a week.

*From your experience, how has your leadership style affected your quality of life let - negative or positive?*

My doctorate is in leadership. So, I realized that I had to change my style. I come from a military back ground, so Chief Williams could not be Chief Williams in church. There is Pastor Williams who every now and then would go into his chief mode. So, my leadership style

vacillated depending on my audience. I did not realize that I would have to change that much.

So, I think because I can go back between the two styles of leadership, it has been positive.

When I say quality of life, it is my mental state when I am at peace I am good to go. I would say that the quality of life with my wife is also better. She is also former military.

## Appendix C - Recruitment Email

18 June 2021

[Recipient]

[Title]

[Company]

[Address 1]

[Address 2]

[Address 3]

Dear Pastor XXXX:

As a graduate student in the Community Care and Counseling Department in the School of Behavioral Sciences at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The purpose of my research is to get an understanding of the experiences of pastors in small Black churches in dealing with challenges in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. I would like to invite you to participate in my study.

Participants must be 18 years of age and older and have pastored a small Black church (less than 200 members) for five years or more. Participants will be asked to take part in a recorded virtual interview (30-45 minutes). Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

In order to participate, please contact me using the information below. I will schedule a time to interview you and ask some additional screening questions.

A consent document is attached to this email. The consent form contains additional information about my research. If you are accepted as a participant, I will ask you to please electronically sign and date the consent form and return it to me via email.

Sincerely,

Samuel Paul  
Doctoral Student

[Redacted Signature]

## **Appendix D - Consent Document**

**Title of the Project:** CHALLENGES THAT CLERGY IN SMALL BLACK CHURCHES  
FACE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

**Principal Investigator:** Samuel Paul, Candidate for the Doctor of Education, Liberty University

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

You are invited to participate in a research study. In order to participate, you must be 18 years or older, and you have been pastoring a small Black church(fewer than 200 members) for five years or more. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

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

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

This study aims to understand different leadership styles and how small Black churches use these styles to deal with challenges they face in the 21st-century. Since there has been little research done on small Black churches, this study will compare the experiences of their pastors which will in turn help others in the future.

### **What will happen if you take part in this study?**

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

1. Meet for the 30–45-minute Zoom video conference which will be recorded so it can be transcribed at a later time.

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

Participants should not expect to receive direct benefits from participating in this study.

Benefits to society may include: The community of small Black churches will be able to view the findings of this study which will identify the similar descriptive challenges and the different struggles that others have experienced. Large Black churches will also have data that they can use to identify the areas that they can show support.

### **What risks might you experience from being in this study?**

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

### **How will personal information be protected?**

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only

the researcher will have access to the records. Data collected from you may be shared for use in future research studies or with other researchers. If data collected from you is shared, any information that could identify you will be removed before the data is shared.

- Participants names will not be used. Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms. Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted, and any paper copies will be shredded.
- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

#### **How will you be compensated for being part of the study?**

Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

#### **Is study participation voluntary?**

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

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

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

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

The researcher conducting this study is Samuel Paul. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at [REDACTED] email [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Fred Volk, at [REDACTED].

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

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

*Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers*

*are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.*

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

*I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.*

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record/video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Subject Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature & Date

**Appendix E - IRB Approval Letter****LIBERTY UNIVERSITY**  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

June 18, 2021

Samuel Paul  
Frederick Volk

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY20-21-918 CHALLENGES THAT CLERGY IN SMALL BLACK CHURCHES FACE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Dear Samuel Paul, Frederick Volk:

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

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

Category 2.(iii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met: The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

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

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

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

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