Liberty University John W. Rawlings School of Divinity

**An Exploration of the Attitudes and Expectations of African American Congregants
Regarding the Succession and Transition of their Senior Pastor**

A Thesis Project Report Submitted to

The Faculty of the Liberty University School of Divinity

in Candidacy for the Degree of

Doctor of Ministry

by

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THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT

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Liberty University Rawlings School of Divinity, 2022
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This study addressed the relevance of assessing the attitudes and expectations of African American congregants regarding the succession and transition of their senior pastor. The study focused on a local church in Baltimore, Maryland. The research assumed that including laity within the succession planning of their senior pastor would produce a healthy transition and future of the church. It further examined how the lack of succession planning within the Black church has caused challenges that could be prevented. The literature and biblical text suggest that the people's role in the success of their leader was critical to the operation of the ministry. The surveys administered to the church's congregation revealed that 82% of respondents believed that two to four years was a sufficient timeframe for the founding pastor to transition the church to his successor and for the church to get acclimated. This information would not have been known without this study. After interviewing the church's founding pastor in question, he advised that assessing the congregants was relevant and needed. This study and research revealed that including congregants in succession planning can yield positive results.

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Attitudes & Expectations of Secular Leadership Succession

Succession planning is key within any leadership role, regardless of the industry it serves. While some may be deemed good leaders for their ability to move an agency or organization forward, the leader who plans for its success after departure is a true visionary. Not only is this type of leader considered a visionary, but it is a depiction of his or her passion for the work to continue in an organized manner. Author Henri Fayol was among the first writers in the 20th century to recognize the need for universal organization. Fayol held the philosophy that the agency's leadership had the responsibility of stabilizing the tenure of staff, and if this were not properly done, he feared that key positions would be filled by individuals who were not qualified or improperly prepared.[1]

The same concern is found in corporate America, where CEO succession plans are lacking primarily due to either the board of directors not wanting to tackle such an issue or being able to dedicate time given the consuming nature of succession planning.[2] In addition, there is a belief that some board members are ill-prepared to manage an effective succession transition. Despite either of these theories, there is a consensus that CEOs and corporate boards are interested in succession planning as they understand that the agency's survival largely depends

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[1] William J. Rothwell, *Effective Succession Planning: Ensuring Leadership Continuity and Building Talent from Within*, (AMACOM, 2015), 6, ProQuest Ebook Central.

[2] Saporito, Thomas J. and Paul Winum, *Inside CEO Succession: The Essential Guide to Leadership Transition*, (New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated., 2012), 5, ProQuest Ebook Central.

on the right person leading.[3] However, when this process is left unplanned or informal, top leaders begin to identify incumbents and successors who strikingly resemble in appearance, background, and values, neglecting the organization's true needs. Therefore, systematic efforts must be put forth to identify and train the best candidate to succeed in prominent positions.[4] While many corporations rely on their capital gains and assets, these are not the primary factors to their overall success. Consequently, if the CEO or the person responsible for governing does not lead, delegate, train, manage and deploy resources responsibly, those factors will quickly fade, sending the company into derision.[5] According to Rothwell's research, numerous chief executives consistently cited the lack of succession planning as a major concern within organizational administration.[6]

Zulqurnain and Mehreen state that CEO turnover can be detrimental to an organization if no succession plan exists. An effective plan not only saves time and costs for external recruitment, but it improves the morale, loyalty, engagement of the employees.[7] An effective succession program implements successorships on every level of the agency, thus giving hope to employees that there is a future opportunity for promotion. When succession is only targeted toward the top-level positions of an agency, it leaves others with no anticipation of a future, yielding to low employee retention.[8] The need for succession planning and the development,

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[3] Rothwell, *Effective Succession*, 12.

[4] Ibid., 13.

[5] Ibid., 5.

[6] Ibid., 12.

[7] Ali Zulqurnain and Aqsa Mehreen. "Understanding Succession Planning as a Combating Strategy for Turnover Intentions." *Journal of Advances in Management Research* 16, no. 2 (2019): 216, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fscholarly-journals%2Funderstanding-succession-planning-as-combating%2Fdocview%2F2204779914%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

[8] Ibid., 217.

strategy, and implementation of such plans are on two completely different ends of the spectrum. An organization must have the appropriate parties involved to develop an effective succession plan, or the plan itself will not work. For corporate America, employees were an intricate component of succession planning. When used, employee retention rates were higher, and it changed the dynamic of the culture within itself.[9] More importantly, the driving force behind corporate succession falls on the board, who has the tough decision on how to approach succession considering the organization's condition, current employees, and the quality of its remaining leaders. With the corporate world achieving success by being inclusive of all parties within the organization, the same dynamics can surely be applied to pastoral succession though the definition is slightly different.

<div align="center">Attitudes & Expectations of Pastoral Succession</div>

Vanderbloemen defines pastoral succession as the intentional process of power, leadership, and authority transfer from one leader to another that is a process relied upon by divine intervention.[10] If this person is not carefully selected, the spiritual and natural repercussions can be damaging for many people. Likewise, within the ministerial context, many pastors are considered the CEO of the ministry. One of the most striking similarities between pastors and corporate executives is the lack of proper preparation for their inevitable exit. While the corporate industry focuses on its next leader as having a proven track record, meeting bottom lines, or having the ability to increase the agency's return on investment (ROI), the pastoral selection is different. The selection of a pastor is driven not only by vocational qualifications but also by God's divine appointment. Paul says in Ephesians 4:11-12 that Jesus gave some apostles,

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[9] Zulqurnain and Mehreen, "Understanding Succession Planning," 218.

[10] William Vanderbloemen and Warren Bird, *Next: Pastoral Succession That Works*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2014), 10, ProQuest Ebook Central.

prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers to perfect the saints for the work of ministry and to

lift the body of Christ. This provides the church with a divine order of leadership instruction.

Mark 3: 14-15 also describes Jesus appointing the twelve disciples who were later commissioned

as apostles. Subsequently, in 1 Timothy 3:2-7, Paul describes the traits of those who desire to be

in the office of bishop, which includes being blameless, husband of one wife, vigilant, having

good behavior, hospitable, able to teach, not bound to wine, not violent, not quarrelsome, not a

lover of money, able to manage his home, display meekness and be of a good report with others.

Another aspect of leader qualification is the attributes of servant leadership. Servant

leaders consider their position as a loan for an act of service and can look beyond their season of

leadership to prepare the next generation.[11] Jesus reflected the true traits of a servant leader when

he invested much time in training and equipping his disciples for leadership when his earthly

ministry was completed. It is clear through the biblical text that God has His hand in the church's

leadership. However, it is the church's responsibility to be led by the Holy Spirit to select its

leaders. One can be certain that when God selects a person to succeed in the pastorate, the

concern of that individual having a hidden agenda or skeletons in the closet is alleviated because

God is omniscient. If the decision is left to man alone who has limited insight, a candidate could

be selected with a hidden background that could haunt the legacy of the predecessor.[12]

According to Bullock, a pastoral candidate must be compatible with the church's

congregants by means of communication style, culture, and one who can be a change agent while

being sensitive to their predecessor's work.[13] Though ministerial succession planning looks

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[11] Ken Blanchard and Phil Hodges, *The Servant Leader*, Nashville: Thomas Nelson Inc., 2003, 21.

[12] Robert C. Anderson, *The Effective Pastor: A Practical Guide to the Ministry*, (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1998), 13.

[13] Warren Bullock, *Your Next Pastor: Guidelines for Finding God's Person for Your Church*, (Saint Louis: Gospel Publishing House, 2013), 1.

different than that of the secular world, certain qualifications and some of the same principles still apply, such as one having the ability to lead people. Contrarily, one consideration that the secular world does not consider when selecting the next leader is the person's spouse. Unfortunately, a pastoral candidate's wife is just as important as the pastor in certain aspects as the two are viewed as one in many instances.[14] It is important that each church consider the role of both and how that fits within their ministry's context.

Secular succession plans solely focus on a leader's skillset and performance. In the ministry context, the next leader must have the skillset and the support of the congregants. For this reason, one of the main aspects of this project, as it relates to succession planning, is incorporating the church's laity into the succession planning process. According to Vanderbloemen, one of the paramount strategies of pastoral search is assessing the character of the church.[15] It is recommended that the church not partake in this assessment alone but bring in a consultant to provide an outside perspective. Ideally, this person or persons will be objective and can weigh the church's pulse collectively without compromise or competition.[16] The consultant will also be able to measure the character and culture of the congregants without being swayed. The board of directors can also be biased when they have worked with a senior pastor for an extended period. Though the board will be making the final decision, it should be done with consideration of not only the findings of the consultant but the feedback from the parishioners. Additionally, these findings will contribute to the overall ministry's context when the time comes to develop the actual succession plan. As such, a successful succession plan is

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[14] Anderson, *The Effective Pastor*, 66.

[15] Vanderbloemen and Bird, *Next Pastoral*, 70.

[16] Ibid., 77.

well planned and strategically done in phases to ensure that the most minute details are covered from beginning to end.

<div align="center">Stages of Succession Planning</div>

Though developing a succession plan is not part of this project, it is important to understand where this phase of succession planning fits into the entire development process. First, a pastoral search committee must be established. This team can consist of the current senior pastor if he is the founder, other clergies of the ministry, and lay members. It is recommended to include people who are not a part of the church, and they can weigh in from an objective viewpoint.[17] Another advantage of having someone from the outside be a part of the search committee is that if internal candidates apply and are not selected, they will know that it was not a biased process.

Second, before a pastoral search can begin, there must be a needs assessment of the ministry's current status and the expectations of a new leader moving forward.[18] A ministry cannot seek a new pastor without understanding the unique necessities required to lead properly. Additionally, this assessment will assist the pastoral search committee to assess if the qualities of potential candidates meet the ministry's current needs. These qualities are also important as they should align with the church's culture, from the youth department to the usher board. This is where the essential need for this project comes to fruition. Perhaps the most important aspect of the assessment is understanding what the congregants desire in a new leader. Research shows that the transition of long-term pastors is difficult for church members.[19] Howbeit, taking a

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[17] Vanderbloemen and Bird, *Next Pastoral*, 41.

[18] Ibid., 17.

[19] Ibid., 28.

congregational survey will be the most useful tool to collect data on the congregation's needs, demographics, and sense of belonging and community within the church.[20] The survey also allows the parishioners to be part of the final hiring decision.

Third, clear communication will be paramount once the assessment is complete and the search begins. Communication will be the foundation to success during this transition, as it will not only keep the congregation involved, but it will keep them engaged throughout the process.[21] It will be important to update the church members often to avoid confusion by information being released prematurely or by multiple parties. This must be done by creating a communication plan outlining the method for how and when updated information will be sent out.[22] A part of that plan will also identify the parties authorized to communicate such information with church members.

Fourth, once the committee has identified ideal final candidates, it is important that the spouse of the incumbent be interviewed as they are equally critical in the decision process. If the couple is not in agreement, it can be a detriment to the church futuristically.[23] Furthermore, meeting with the spouse earlier than later in the interview process is important to avoid last-minute disappointments. In essence, the spouse will have intimate knowledge of hidden character flaws that could be devastating to a ministry.

Fifth, once a final candidate is selected and onboarded, a plan should be developed to smoothly transition the ministry into the hands of the successor. One key point to remember at this phase is to communicate with the incumbent regularly to avoid losing them in a competing

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[20] Vanderbloemen and Bird, *Next Pastoral*, 80.

[21] Ibid., 26.

[22] Ibid., 56.

[23] Ibid., 61.

job market. [24] One important factor that must be taken into consideration is the current staff and

if the incoming pastor will have the authority to re-staff his team or not. Bullock indicates that

new pastors should have the authority to not only restaff but implement their vision without

impediments.[25] This aspect should be a part of the church's initial needs assessment. While this is

not a fully comprehensive succession plan, depending upon the church, these points may be

modified as needed to fit the context of the ministry.

Ministry Context

The ministry context for this research project centers on First Baptist Church (FBC) (a

pseudonym) located within Baltimore, Maryland. FBC was established in June 1985 in West

Baltimore by its founder, Pastor James Rowe (pseudonym). Pastor Rowe transitioned from his

home church, where he, his parents, and siblings had attended for years. Responding to the call

of full-time ministry, Pastor Rowe, who retired after over twenty years working in the secular

industry, found a storefront building in a crime-infested neighborhood that he turned into FBC's

first facility. This was truly a humble beginning as the building had preexisting conditions that

posed a challenge to operating a ministry. Pastor Rowe often recalled the roof leaks and bags of

trash he would collect from the front of the building. The ministry was started with just ten

charter members, most of whom were relatives. For some time, he acted as the choir director,

church bus driver, preacher, counselor, and teacher. He furthered his education by completing a

master's and doctoral program at a local seminary. In addition, he completed his Ph.D. some

years later. He recalled wanting to be properly prepared to do the work of ministry, as a doctor

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[24] Vanderbloemen and Bird, *Next Pastoral*, 65.

[25] Bullock, *Your Next Pastor*, 20.

would attend medical school or a lawyer at law school. Pastor Rowe encourages those in ministry to pursue proper seminarian education to lead God's people effectively.

Research considers Pastor Rowe as having a transformational leadership style as he exudes characteristics such as being charismatic, visionary, and persuasive.[26] His messages of biblical truth dealt with everyday circumstances that were engaging and appealing to people who were saved and unsaved. Not long after the church was established, it outgrew the first location and moved to a larger site. He used his love for music and his prior experience as a choir director to develop one of the most vibrant youth choirs in the region. There were youth coming from throughout the city to either see the youth choir sing or to join the church. Before long, there were so many young people that Pastor Rowe would soon appoint the church's first youth pastor. This person would later lead one of the most robust youth departments in the church's history and city. In addition, Pastor Rowe worked with the minister of music to record the church's first mass choir gospel CD.

Near the year 2000, the church outgrew the second facility and moved to its current location. Pastor Rowe, now elevated to Bishop, needed to expand the church's day staff to ensure that the church's operations be maintained during the week to address the community's needs. Until this time, the church only had a handful of elders, ministers, and deacons to assist with the ministry's needs. Ephesians 4: 11-16 describes how the principal task of pastors is to equip the saints for the work of ministry, which Pastor Rowe exemplified. To better streamline, he trained and appointed four new associate pastors who would oversee certain areas of the ministry. To date, the church has continued to grow where Bishop Rowe had to establish an executive team

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[26] Mary W. Langley and William M. Kahnweiler, "The Role of Pastoral Leadership in the Sociopolitically Active African American Church," *Organization Development Journal* 21, no. 2 (Summer, 2003): 44, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fscholarly-journals%2Frole-pastoral-leadership-sociopolitically-active%2Fdocview%2F198033380%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

consisting of a CFO, CAO, and himself as the CEO. Though the church has been in its current location for twenty-five years, it has had quite a few updates, renovations, and parking expansion projects encompassing the span of half of a city block. It is located on a residential street composed of row homes parallel to a major thoroughfare with access to public transportation. Many members drive to church, but some commute via public transportation.

The demographic of the community is 62.4% African American and 68.7% of all other ethnicities, with both groups expanding among all ages. The median household income for all demographics is $30,271, and the poverty level as of 2019 is 21.2%. The education level within the community is 85.2% high school diplomas, while college graduates at the bachelor's level average 31.9%. Some of the surrounding neighborhoods within a three-mile radius are hot spots for violent crimes.[27]

Since the establishment of the church, the congregation has grown from ten to over 7,000 members, with a ministerial staff collectively made of approximately 100 ministers, ordained elders, and associate pastors. The church now has forty operational components that meet the ministry's needs and that of the community. Many of these ministries are geared to extend to inner-city families, those incarcerated, the homeless, hungry, and the elderly. Since the neighborhood is not within walking distance to any food markets, the church's food pantry is a major asset to the hungry and those in need.

Bishop Rowe is known for helping people near and far using his personal resources. He has written multiple books and preached in various countries. His voice has been heard on radio broadcasts and television. He is known for not only preaching and teaching God's word in

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[27] "QuickFacts," United States Census Bureau, August 13, 2021, https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/baltimorecitymaryland,US/PST045219.

excellence, but he is known for always starting services consistently on time. When Bishop Rowe travels to preach at other churches, the members who accompany him expect the same level of excellence they receive at home. Unfortunately, other ministries do not always begin services on-time and exegete scripture appropriately, leaving some disappointed. Congregants relate to him as a spiritual father and, to some, a father they never had. Research shows that a pastor can best influence a congregation by modeling a loving, caring attitude toward his flock to display how parishioners should conduct themselves.[28] Many parishioners view Pastor Rowe as a heaven-sent. Trask et al. state that pastors are God's gifts to the church, and any gift given by God is valuable and should be treated as such.[29] Out of this ministry, many other churches were birthed by the pastors that Pastor Rowe had commissioned.

As it stands, Bishop Rowe is approaching eighty years old after serving in the capacity of senior pastor for nearly forty years. The study conducted by Vanderbloemen provided a list of the largest churches in the United States with their senior pastors listed in order by age. That research suggests that many of these churches should be in the process of succession planning as several of the pastors listed were well beyond the average age of senior pastors.[30] Howbeit, this researcher spoke to this founding pastor about the issue of succession, he stated that it was something that concerned him as he is ready to transition the church, but the Lord has not revealed who his successor would be. Currently, no candidates are being considered as the successor. Though he has a succession plan ready, he feels strongly to allow the Lord's leading in this process as he wants assurance that the successor will continue to take the ministry to the

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[28] Anderson, *The Effective Pastor*, 136.

[29] Thomas E. Trask, Goodall, Wayde I. and Bicket, Zenas J., T*he Pentecostal Pastor: A Mandate for the 21st Century* (Springfield: Gospel Publishing House, 2012), 22.

[30] Vanderbloemen, *The Pastoral Search*, 192.

level God wants it. Therefore, he leaves the timing to God. Bishop Rowe's vision is to expand

the ministry, pay off the mortgage to the church to provide more to the community, re-develop a

robust youth department, renovate other areas of the church, and expand parking. Meanwhile, he

is beginning to delegate more duties to the associate pastors to relieve some of the burdens.

Problem Presented

This project addresses the problem that the Black church has not implemented succession

planning, producing negative results. Succession planning is a difficult task for any organization

or agency, whether it is a secular or religious entity.[31] As it relates to this project, the Black

church has met challenges implementing succession planning, producing negative results such as

poor leadership transition or having no time for transition.[32] However, this is not isolated to the

African American church alone, as this is seen with the transition of Evangelist Billy Graham

when he became ill and his son had no desire to succeed him, leaving the question of who would

become his successor.[33] Unfortunately, there was no succession plan in place.

There is little research covering leadership transition related to the African American

church. However, there is evidence that most Baptist African American pastors are not held

accountable to a denominational hierarchy, leaving succession planning to the leaders

themselves.[34] In such cases, senior pastors chair the board of their churches, making succession

planning a difficult process at times. The evidence of independent leadership is also true for

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[31] Mangaliso M. Matshobane, and Maake Masango, "The Challenge of Pastoral Succession in African Independent Pentecostal Churches," *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 76, no. 2 (Fall, 2020), p.1, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fscholarly-journals%2Fchallenge-pastoral-succession-african-independent%2Fdocview%2F2470840098%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Gustav Niebuhr. "Billy Graham's Son Seen as Possible Successor in Ministry," *The Washington Post,* (Winter 1993), 1, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fhistorical-newspapers%2Fbilly-grahams-son-seen-as-possible-successor%2Fdocview%2F140831449%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

[34] Langley and Kahnweiler, "The Role of Pastoral Leadership," 44.

African Pentecostal churches that do not have a leader rotation system; their pastors, typically

founders, serve long terms even until death, leaving behind a contentious succession process.[35]

The long tradition of senior pastors pastoring for extensive periods of time has been an

established part of history. However, research now shows that the average senior pastor who was

not the founder remains the pastor of a church for eight years before transitioning.[36] According to

Vanderbloemen, the average age between the outgoing pastor and the successor was twenty-two

years. The ages ranged from the forties to the eighties, some having an average thirteen-month

overlap transition.[37] There are many reasons why pastors transition, including the loss of passion,

personal health issues, ministry hardship, and stress.[38] The problem, in general, is that there is a

generation of senior pastors who are nearing the end of their tenure with no successor in line to

take their place, which prompts the pastor or the church board to select someone who is not

qualified. Unfortunately, the senior pastor's transition sometimes comes without notice due to

sickness, resignation, crisis, or death. Given that the same problems can and have occurred in

corporate America, as a means of resolution, most publicly traded companies are now required to

develop a succession plan. One author asks if the church could follow this example or continue

setting up too many churches for long-term failure.[39]

Moreover, the problem is a concern for the senior pastor of First Baptist Church in

Baltimore, Maryland, who is approaching eighty years old, and there is no successor in sight.

The primary issue is that the Lord has not yet provided insight or direction on who would fill this

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[35] Matshobane, and Masango, "The Challenge of Pastoral Succession," 1.

[36] Vanderbloemen and Bird, *Next Pastoral*, 22.

[37] Ibid., 148.

[38] Michael Anthony and Mick Boersma, *Moving On: Moving Forward*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 153.

[39] Ibid., 7.

major role. Though a tentative succession plan is in place for when a successor is discovered, it

cannot be tailored or implemented until the incumbent is identified. Additionally, there are

subsequent problems that will need to be addressed when this former question is answered.

Undoubtedly, when there is a certain comfort level and acclimation with the founding pastor, the

laity is quite apprehensive about changing. Consequently, the vacancy can be hard to fill when a

congregation becomes accustomed to a senior pastor.

Vanderbloemen notes that one of the church's transitional problems is filling the pastoral

position with a current member or someone from another ministry. The decision will also be

predicated on if a person should be selected based on the similar personality of the predecessor

or someone completely different in nature.[40] Either way, a decision must be made. More

importantly, the laity within the African American church can be a powerful group of

congregants who makes up a good portion of the decision-making body. Eventually, pastors will

adapt to the level of the congregation's expectations if it does not demoralize or compromise

their character.[41] As such, it is prudent to assess the congregants' expectations and attitudes

within succession planning which will be the targeted result of this project and used as the

preliminary component that will contribute to an effective transitional process at FBC.

Essentially, this project addresses the Black church's problem with not implementing succession

planning, producing negative results.

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[40] Vanderbloemen and Bird, *Next: Pastoral*, 22.

[41] James Henry Harris. "Laity Expectations of Ministers in the Black Urban Church: A Study of Political and Social Expectations in the Context of Ministry to Community and World." Order No. 8517780, *Old Dominion University*, 1985, 24, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global,

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this Doctor of Ministry action research project is to identify and understand the laity's attitudes and expectations related to the succession and transition of the senior pastor at First Baptist Church in Baltimore, Maryland. While other succession research and plans are a good resource, healthy succession planning is not only based on science. Rather, the information collected directly from the parishioners of First Baptist Church will hopefully lend a guide to other ministries that are in the process of succession planning. More importantly, there must be an understanding that this process is not based on human logic but must be spiritually led through prayer with the realization that God's leading is necessary.[42]

Essentially, this project will allow the current founder to properly develop an effective transition based on the information collected from his parishioners. In essence, this research will be the congregation's opportunity to give preliminary input into the decision-making process of selecting their next pastor. As previously established, the laity's involvement will be key in the selection of the next pastor and their success. Research shows that the laity's expectations concerning issues within the urban community such as poverty, racism, and social conditions can foster a more active role in promoting change by collective advocacy.[43] Otherwise, the pastor will be in an uphill battle trying to serve a community alone. Therefore, the congregations' input on this matter will be critical.

Basic Assumptions

This project's seven basic assumptions include the following: (1) The founding pastor has not identified a suitable successor. (2) For this reason, there is no comprehensive succession or

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[42] Harris. "Laity Expectations," 10.

[43] Ibid., 5.

transitional plan currently in place. (3) There are currently no candidates within the church who are being considered. (4) The congregation does not want a new pastor. (5) The current pastor does not have a consensus on what the laity desires when it comes to succession planning. (6) The senior pastor and this local church are stable and thriving. (7) The attitudes and expectations related to succession planning cannot be assessed for every church member.

Definitions

Attitude – evaluative response, positive or negative, to a person, situation, product, idea, agency.[44]

CAO – Chief Administrative Officer

CEO – Chief Executive Officer

CFO – Chief Financial Officer

Church – Refers to the body of believers

Congregants – For this project, used as an alternative word for church members.

DNA – Deoxyribonucleic acid

Expectation – Anticipated desire or want.

First Baptist Church – A pseudonym for the church being studied.

FBC – Acronym for First Baptist Church (the church being studied).

Founding Pastor – The senior pastor who established FBC (James Rowe).

IRB - Institutional Review Board (Liberty University).

Laity – For this project, alternative word for church members.

Local Church – The specific church that this succession plan is being developed.

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[44] Joop Pligt and Michael Vliek, *The Psychology of Influence: Theory, Research and Practice*, London: Routledge, 2016, 6.

Parishioners – For this project, alternative word for church members.

Pastor Bob Smith – Founding Pastor of Second Baptist Church.

Pastor Frank Jones – Former Lead Pastor and Successor at Third Baptist Church.

Pastor James Rowe – A pseudonym for the current senior pastor/founder of First Baptist Church.

Predecessor – The founding or senior pastor expected to transition from ministry.

ROI – Return of Investment

SBC – Second Baptist Church

Senior Pastor – Lead pastor of the church (James Rowe).

Successor – The individual succeeding the founding/senior pastor.

TBC – Third Baptist Church - Church of the successor who did not have a successful transition.

The Black church – Church with members of African descent.

Limitations

This project is designed to specifically assist First Baptist Church in beginning the process of effective succession planning. The preliminary process involves collecting FBC parishioners' expectations and attitudes surrounding succession planning. However, some of the limitations will include biases from the congregants. First, the congregants undoubtedly will expect the successor to reflect the personality and spirit of his predecessor. However, it is unfortunate as this expectation, in some ways, cannot always be achieved. Second, though other churches can use the surveys to collect data, the information collected in this project will specifically identify the expectations and attitudes of this church's membership.

Third, another bias expected is that the respondents may not be realistic with expectations of the new leader, which could potentially skew the results. Fourth, due to time constraints, this project is not designed to be completely exhaustive. However, it can be modified to fit other

ministries with a similar cultural setting. The fifth and final limitation is that although the perspective and opinion of every member of FBC are crucial, however, due to the size of the church, only a limited consensus can be achieved given the decreased population sample of the project.

Delimitations

The delimitations for this project will focus on First Baptist Church which has a congregation size of approximately 7,000 members. The research will be in the form of a research survey model. The researcher chose this model to collect data from parishioners ranging in age, membership tenure, and their role in the church. The rationale is to get a consensus of what the church population is looking for in a new leader. The research survey model will also collect data from two other senior pastors who have already undergone a succession transition. This will provide their perspective on what they perceived their congregants desired.

Due to the ministry's size, the scope of the research will be narrowed down to a population of fifty individuals. The group will be selected based on a predetermined criterion within this smaller population. Another delimitation will result from COVID, as restrictions are still in place at most churches in this region. As previously mentioned, people's comfort level toward being interviewed in person will be a factor. As a result, the surveys will be conducted electronically, and any interviews will be conducted via telephone or Zoom video conference.

Thesis Statement

This project asserts that if congregants are included in the succession planning process, the selected successor will be better embraced by the general body and experience an extended, healthy tenure. Establishing a clear understanding of the member's anticipation of the

successor's qualifications, personality, and background is essential for a smooth transition. As such, First Baptist Church and its laity will benefit from this project's study.

Succession planning and implementation within the African American church can help fill a void when a local church faces the end of a founding pastor's tenure. As cited in the Bible through situational examples, succession plans help with the forward movement of God's mission without interruption. As such, the congregation and the entire community that the church serves will benefit from the smooth transition based on the project's results. In summary, this research is designed to study the expectations and attitudes of those affected by a transitioning founding pastor. It can be used to assist with leadership transitions across the body of Christ that can assist in the succession process.

Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework

The need for the church to be proactive in succession planning is evident as many pastors

do not have a plan for their inevitable departure. A growing amount of research shows that the

time to prepare for pastoral transition is long before it occurs.[45] The misconception is that a

succession plan must be conducted concurrently when a pastor is in the process of leaving.

However, the goal should be to complete the plan in phases over a multi-year period. There are

many ways to conduct a succession plan besides preparing for the transition. Research shows

that some churches planned and successfully hired someone who had never been a pastor, while

another church started small, planned, and hired a successor who expanded the ministry into

multiple campuses.[46] The key is being proactive and having a plan ready to transition the most

senior leader. This process may look different depending upon that ministry's context. Since this

project only points to a phase of the overall succession process, it is important to provide

research supporting its relevance.

Churches have reactively approached succession planning and pastoral transition without

making it a comprehensive strategy. Unfortunately, there is no collective literature that

sufficiently outlines succession planning that includes the input of the church's laity. The

purpose of this section is to identify applicable resources that can help better conceptualize the

need for assessing the congregants' attitudes and expectations regarding pastoral transition. As

outlined later in this section, the people who follow spiritual leaders in the Bible have a large

impact on their success and failures; how they connect with that leader is essential. These

resources will individually assert relevant information regarding the principles of attitudes and

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[45] Vanderbloemen and Bird, *Next: Pastoral*, 20.

[46] Ibid., 95.

expectations and how aspects of influence can alter them. In addition, some sources provide insight into general leadership and research methods. Both can be used to further solidify the objective of this project by showing similar challenges within other leadership spectrums and research methods that help put those ideologies into a qualitative perspective.

Literature Review

Pastoral Transition and Exit Strategy

The literature reviewed provides a significant contribution to the realization that the attitudes and expectations of the laity are critical in pastoral succession planning. The guidance provided to pastors across the country from various denominations experiencing similar transitions during a literature survey revealed that preliminary succession planning correlates with the senior pastor's understanding of self.[47] The implication is that if a senior pastor does not have a clear understanding of self, they will not transition properly. A pastor without a renewed vision for the next phase after leaving ministry can cause him to hold on to that which should be released. This is defined as an intrapsychic loss, "where an individual loses an image of self because their identity is interwoven in the ministry work."[48]

Undoubtedly, some senior pastors in transition are looking to lead another ministry, but they must develop an exit strategy that will not negatively affect church operations or the laity. This is essential in the succession process as the predecessor must effectively separate from the senior leadership role so the successor can lead without influence from past times. This research further showed that pastoral influence was significant. In fact, Vanderbloemen and Bird suggest that the congregation will become more like their next senior pastor regarding lifestyle

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[47] Matshobane, and Masango, "The Challenge of Pastoral Succession," 4

[48] Ibid., 4.

expectations.[49] Unfortunately, this cannot be done effectively if the previous pastor still influences congregants with how things once were or try to push an old vision. The text essentially mirrors principles that were taken for survey development that will offer the laity the opportunity to provide input for a proper emotional, physical, spiritual, and relational departure for the current pastor.[50]

Simultaneously, the survey approach will also provide input on what is desired in a new pastor. Generally, in addition to the current pastor's transition, the church board is responsible for managing this restructuring, developing systems for a search committee, interviewing potential candidates, and properly merging the new pastor with the congregation.[51] However, for this project, the current senior pastor also serves on the board and may want to join with these initiatives. It is not uncommon for a senior pastor who founded the ministry to chair the church's board. In these cases, the founder must take a step back from chairing the board and allowing decisions for the transition to be made collectively by the committee. To stay true to this research, it is recommended that this not be the case for best practices and results.

<div align="center">Survey Research Model</div>

While the study provides practical means to transition, it also examines the process of how surveying should be completed. It will provide an overview of errors that can come with the survey research model and the types of surveys that can be used in this project to assess the attitudes and expectations of parishioners. The relevance of this research approach as it relates to the study of this project is that it is designed to provide information about the congregation that would normally be unattainable. By design, the surveys are meant to produce statistics about a

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[49] Matshobane, and Masango, "The Challenge of Pastoral Succession," 148.

[50] Anthony and Boersma, *Moving On*, 204.

[51] Bullock, *Your Next Pastor*, 5.

target population that will provide needed information to make an informed decision. The answers from the survey can help the pastoral search committee alleviate transitional pains by allowing the church members to take part in succession planning. It further outlines the types of errors, biases, and variability that can be a limitation of the results.[52] One of the primary errors that must be considered for this project is sampling error. Sampling error, by definition, is the variation that exists with possible error stemming solely from the data being collected from a sample rather than from every single member of the population. The goal is to minimize the random difference within the sample population by ensuring the sample is designed and selected as close to the general population as possible.[53] This information ultimately assists the researcher in obtaining the most accurate impartial information regarding the laity's perspective on their pastor's transition.

<div align="center">Practical Theology and Qualitative Research</div>

Practical theology is an intricate component of this project as it focuses on human experience and theological reflection on the practices of the church as it relates to the practices of the world.[54] The text provides clarity to this framework which says, "the actions of Christians are celebrations of and attestations to God's reconciling work in the world which begins and ends in Jesus Christ. The relationship of these actions to non-Christians is one of both similarity and difference. The similarity is that all human actions are both participate in and fall short of the purposes of God. The difference is that those who profess belief and adhere to the membership

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[52] Floyd J. Fowler, *Types of Error in Surveys. In Survey Research Methods (4th ed.),* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2009), 12.

[53] Ibid., 13.

[54] John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, London: SCM Press, 2016, 6.

of the church have been called to make explicit the celebration of God's work."[55] Essentially, two of the main comparisons this project makes are the leadership of a pastor or that of the church and a CEO or that of the world.

While both leadership styles can be flawed in their own way, practical theology has one goal: to enable faithful living and authentic practice among believers.[56] While the church has biblical standards based on the truth of God, the world operates from another agenda. In addition, the church sits on the foundation of recognizing who Jesus is and lives in the revelation thereof while the world does not. This significantly impacts the way decisions are made and why they are made. When it comes to succession, the church relies on the biblical qualifications of a leader and not on a particular set of industry standards. This research will show that the attitudes and expectations of the laity regarding their senior pastor's transition will be determined by their human experience within the church to date.

This source further illuminates the qualitative aspect of this project, which essentially focuses on things in their natural setting while attempting to make sense of and interpret phenomena in terms where people provided great contributions.[57] It is not the purpose of this project to solve or determine why the congregants express these particular feelings but to collect enough data through surveys and interviews to analyze and shed new light in ways that have not been presented before. Above all, the purpose is to provide enough informational substance to help FBC select its next leader.

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[55] Swinton and Mowat, *Theology and Qualitative Research*., 8.

[56] Ibid., 9.

[57] Ibid., 28.

How a Pastor's Decisions Impacts Laity's Attitudes

More importantly, the assessment results would essentially assess the attitudes of the laypeople, which affect the decision-making process for the next pastor. The literature suggests that people's "attitudes" are not only based upon good or bad feelings or a matter of opinion. It is rather regarded as a sense of truth until new facts or arguments are presented to change the thought process that originally provoked the perception or attitude.[58] The challenge to the theory of attitude formation stands on the very notion that people can disagree with one another while assessing the same situation, idea, or circumstance. The propensity for people to be selective of what information they pay attention to is further increased based upon personalities, backgrounds, and preconceived notions, which becomes that person's bias. This intersection of disagreement and bias breeds a person's view of the world as the only reality.[59] The caveat is that people tend to adjust their attitudes to align with a person they genuinely like.[60] This research points out that regardless of a person's attitudes, they can still be changed based on presented facts. An existing pastor taking the lead in the communication of the pastoral transition would promote better receptivity from the congregants, and thus the rapport and trust factor will be the driving force.

In conjunction, the better prepared the exiting pastor is at the time of transition, including allowing the congregants to participate, will produce more trustworthy outcomes. To help with this realization, one author suggests that the founding pastor should reflect on how far the ministry has grown under his leadership. This will help the existing pastor celebrate the

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[58] Eiser and Pligt, *Attitudes and Decisions*, 1.

[59] Ibid., 2.

[60] Ibid., 20

progression and fully embrace and move forward into another chapter. It further speaks of the church's DNA which is the nucleus of its growth and development. This information will help the current pastor articulate a picture of the church's DNA that will need to be maintained and properly translated to the successor for the ministry's continual growth.[61] In other words, though the current pastor is transitioning, this is an opportunity to express to the new pastor the foundation on which the ministry has thrived. Expressing the church's DNA does not mean the successor cannot invoke a new vision but consider that which the congregants have long cherished. In addition, the reviewed literature offers material that will help develop a process for the continuity of FBC's leadership in general. The information provided will offer information on creating a succession program to train leaders internally for future leadership positions.[62] Senior pastors and corporate-level CEOs alike bear the critical obligation for the training of future leaders.

It should be noted that this phenomenon was observed in another part of the literature, which indicates that pastors today are more commonly taking on the dual-title of senior pastor and CEO. Given the nature and similarities of CEO operations related to succession, literature on CEOs can be applied to this project. Outside of the spiritual aspects, the succession process between a CEO and senior pastor is similar but not identical. The relevance of this book to this project is the ability to parallel some general principles of corporate CEO succession with that of a senior pastor.[63] One key principle that can be adopted is that corporations develop talent pools and train individuals to be potential successors but do not select one until the time presents itself

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[61] Gary L. McIntosh, *Taking Your Church to the Next Level: What Got You Here Won't Get You There*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2009), 128, ProQuest Ebook Central.

[62] Rothwell, *Effective Succession,* 6.

[63] Saporito and Winum, *Inside CEO Succession,* 36.

and the right person is identified.[64] The same rule can be applied to the church as it relates to

training the next generation, but the Holy Spirit guides the identification of the successor.

Furthermore, regardless of whether a senior pastor adopts the title CEO or not, having a proper

exit strategy will impact how successful the transition will be. This research component will be

an integral part of the founding pastor's transition, especially if he desires to remain a part of the

ministry in some capacity, which is the case for FBC. In addition, this resource helps the senior

pastor within the succession plan shape the church's culture, which will be important to a smooth

transfer of leadership.[65]

<div align="center">Challenges of Succession Planning</div>

Research revealed some of the challenges Black churches encounter due to the lack of

succession planning. The main challenge is that founding pastors end their ministry either by

death or retirement and leave the succession process boisterous or nonexistent. Ideally, senior

pastors should train young people early for the pastoral vocation. They should be taught the skills

and given the tools to lead God's people and manage every component of ministry. Not only

does succession planning train and develop new leaders, but it also makes a clear line in whom is

deemed qualified to fill the most senior leadership role. When this component is lacking, there is

turmoil among other leaders who will succeed the founder. Another challenge is different

leadership styles. Due to a founding pastor's longevity, the congregants are acclimated to one

leadership style.[66] This becomes a challenge to any successor if the transition is not implemented

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[64] Rothwell, *Effective Succession*, 210.

[65] Vanderbloemen and Bird, Next: Pastoral, 13.

[66] Matshobane, and Masango, "The Challenge of Pastoral Succession," 2.

properly. Though there is no fighting for position at FBC, understanding the challenge will push the need to be proactive and plan ahead.

Gail Irwin provides further insight into some challenges faced when a long-term pastor is in transition. When a long-term pastor does not want to leave the ministry, there is a need to set certain boundaries to keep him from usurping the authority of his successor.[67] For the purpose of this project, this information has been used to compose detailed survey questions to the founding pastor about his desired relationship with the ministry after departure and what role he seeks to hold post-transition.

The scholarly journal article by Matshobane and Masango outlines multiple challenges that the Black church encountered prior to succession transitions were: (1) Financial Security. All pastors interviewed for this article agreed that losing their financial perks as senior leaders made it hard to retire. (2) Loss of Influence. Of the senior pastors surveyed, 93.75% were afraid of losing their influence over the church after their departure.[68] (3) Mistrust of Successor. Of the pastors interviewed for this topic, 87.7% said they did not trust their successor and believed that their established vision would be abandoned. Then, the article illuminated several challenges that the church contends with during succession, which were: (4) No Succession Plan. All pastors who participated revealed that their respective churches had no succession plan, making it difficult for their congregation to know who should lead the church. (5) No Oversight Structure. Again, many respondents, to the tune of 95%, stated that there was no structure in place for congregational oversight. In addition, some additional challenges identified after succession was

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[67] Gail L. Irwin, "Blurring the lines: can retiring pastors mentor their own successors?" *The Christian Century*, vol 134, issue 3, (Winter 2017): 2, https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A481244094/BIC?u=vic_liberty&sid=summon&xid=7463fdc0.

[68] Matshobane, and Masango, "The Challenge of Pastoral Succession," 4.

implemented were: (6) Sudden Changes: 80% percent of the successors interviewed admitted to not taking the time to learn the church, the congregation, the culture, or even their predecessor's way of doing things before implementing sudden changes. While they believed that this would help the congregants move forward, it created challenges. (7) Resistance from the Congregation. Ultimately, these types of challenges collectively or separately would receive pushback. Some successors noted that some parishioners were simply stuck in the past while others had their own choice of who should lead.[69]

Subsequently, these challenges are seen in the African American church, but it also extends to non-Black churches. The well-known ministry of Evangelist Billy Graham is a premier example. Graham, who was later diagnosed with Parkinson's disease, did not have a succession plan in place. Many thought that his son Franklin Graham would be the ideal person to succeed him. Unfortunately, this is not always the case, as seen in the biblical text where King David's son Absalom tried to steal the throne in second Samuel the fifteenth chapter. Howbeit, in this case, when Franklin Graham was asked if he would take over the ministry, he said, "I cannot do it the same way my father has done it because I am not Billy Graham. It would have to be my own way."[70] To emphasize his point, the Presbyterian Church defies the succession model that shapes the transition around retaining the exiting leader's vision as it believes that there will be no space for innovation.[71] However, this is not the case for every succession situation. This short but relevant article will be used as a reference point within this project to emphasize that the founding pastor should allow his successor to manage the ministry his own way without losing the tenets of its foundation.

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[69] Matshobane, and Masango, "The Challenge of Pastoral Succession," 5.

[70] Niebuhr, "Billy Graham."

[71] Irwin, "Blurring the lines," 2.

Similarly, this was the main contributor to the tremendous growth of the Lakewood Church in Houston, Texas. The well-known pastor Joel Osteen was the opposite of his father, including shortening service length and preaching to a broader audience. Joel was an introvert, and his father was an extrovert, yet the differences between the two yielded unimaginable church growth. Essentially, expecting a successor to lead like their predecessor sets them up for failure; different methods can still achieve similar results.[72] The vital takeaway is that the unlikely candidates can become the most amazing pastoral success achieving astonishing results if allowed in their own way.[73]

For biblical context, David was an unlikely candidate. In 1 Samuel 16, he was not called with his other seven brothers when Samuel first arrived to anoint the next king. It was not until all seven of his brothers were rejected by God that Samuel asked David's father, Jesse, if he had any other sons. Jesse passively told him about David, his youngest son who kept the animals. Samuel calls for David, and God tells Samuel in verse 13 to anoint him, king. David was not originally called because he was an unlikely candidate. His brothers were all soldiers, but he was not. This is a challenge that pastors must avoid. Successors should not be chosen based on their appearance or popularity but by the leading of God's Spirit. Due to Samuel obeying God's command, David became one of the greatest kings in biblical history, leading the way for the King of Kings.

Servant Leadership

The literature on servant leadership focuses on a servant leader's heart, head, hands, and habits. It further contrasts servant leadership with a self-serving leader whose approach is

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[72] Niebuhr, Gustav. "Billy Graham."

[73] Vanderbloemen and Bird, "*Next: Pastoral*, 91.

drastically opposite. While self-serving leaders spend much of their time protecting their authoritative status, they tend to not include others in decision-making efforts as feedback is typically rejected or misunderstood.[74] Another difference is in the self-serving leader's approach to succession planning. This type of leader is addicted to a sense of power, recognition, and fear of losing position; efforts to train successors are non-existent. Contrarily, the servant leader views leadership as an act of service that embraces feedback and uses it as a resource to make themselves and the service they provide better.[75] This research component emphasizes that senior pastors must exude servant leadership to ensure the proper transition.

On the one hand, some pastors have not displayed servant leadership as they forgo retirement and succession planning, remaining in position until death, viewing it as dedication. However, pastors cannot take the same succession approach as a corporate CEO. While servant leadership can be exemplified by those who are not believers, it should be expected of pastors as their framework is biblical in nature. This biblical framework will be discussed in the next section with scriptural support in Matthew 20:28, where Jesus stated that he did not come to be served but to serve.[76]

The research derived from the literature reviewed addressed issues, circumstances, or viewpoints on why assessing the attitudes and expectations of congregants is important as it relates to pastoral transition. Sometimes the transition of a senior pastor can be presumed to be the duty of that pastor or the board of directors only. It is rather apparent that the input from congregants has never been of critical importance until this research. Church leaders should reevaluate their approach to succession planning based upon literature that supports the input of

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[74] Ken Blanchard and Phil Hodges, *The Servant Leader*, 17.

[75] Ibid., 18.

[76] Ibid., 56.

those who are a part of their congregation. This may be difficult for some pastors accustomed to being the sole point of authority. Subsequently, this type of leader lacks one main characteristic of a servant leader: being a team player and embracing the feedback of others.

Additionally, the literature review revealed that there is a lack of succession planning within the church at large and, more specifically, the Black church. It also revealed that succession planning is not a process that should be tackled by one person or approached wantonly. Extensive thought and time should be given to each step of the succession process depending on that ministry's context. Though there was not an overabundance of literature in assessing the attitudes and expectations of congregants directly, biblical scripture will be used to justify such a strategy in the next section. Once the transitioning pastors understand that the congregants are a part of their success, they will seriously consider the members' inputs in selecting the next leader.

Theological Foundations

The idea of leadership succession is not new but has been in place historically for a long time. As it relates to this project, pastoral succession has a theological foundation that has a historical, biblical, and theological origin. Pastoral succession is not directly defined in the Bible, but the pattern of individuals succeeding their predecessors is prevalent throughout the biblical text. Originally, God's blessing was through a divine-human relationship intended to flow from family to family and generation to generation.[77] Adam and Eve began this process which was quite effective as it is further seen with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.[78] Man's rebellion essentially disrupts God's divine process. While the process was modified, it was never destroyed. When

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[77] John Walvoord, and Roy B, Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, (Colorado Springs: David Cook, 1983), 29.

[78] Ibid., 65.

David was disqualified from rebuilding the temple, his son Solomon would succeed him inheriting the duty to rebuild the temple. During the construction of the new temple, God reaffirmed to Solomon that the promise of establishing David's Kingdom forever would be fulfilled through him.[79] Evidence of this is also demonstrated with Jesus coming through the lineage of David. Even though King Saul had to be removed from the throne, David's appointment was crucial as the messiah would come through royal blood. Here, the divine-human relationship remains in tack.

As a brief overview, this project holds five theological foundations to demonstrate scriptural support for its research. The first is to train the next generation of leaders. It is important to point out that new leaders must be properly trained. Properly trained leaders who are taught the importance of succession will better embrace assessing the attitudes and expectations of the laity. Scripture provides examples of leaders who embraced succession, such as Moses, Elijah, Paul, and Jesus, to name a few. The second is understanding that the ultimate selection of a new leader belongs to God. While succession planning is man's way of preparing for a proper transference of leadership, the final decision belongs to God. As succession planning has its share of benefits, the third theological principle shows that its absence may bring challenges. These include people who attempt to usurp God's choice of a leader, ultimately causing confusion among the local church. Putting succession planning in place would avoid these types of issues. Fourth, successors meeting biblical qualifications are essential. The Bible outlines the qualifications of God's leaders to help the church avoid the hardship of poor leadership. The fifth principle outlines the importance of laity and their role in the success of their leader. Every good leader never stands alone, and scripture shows that people have a huge

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[79] Walvoord, and Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 499.

impact on their success. These theological foundations will be used to establish the biblical

justification for church boards and senior pastors to allow God to lead in the process. These

theological factors set the framework for the forthcoming theoretical components.

<div align="center">Train the Next Generation of Successors</div>

Moses and Joshua

The first principle for the theological foundation focuses on the need to train the next

generations of leaders or successors sooner rather than later. One of the most prominent

leadership transfers in the Bible is the story of Moses and Joshua. Deuteronomy chapter 31

outlines the transition of authority and leadership between the two. This chapter, along with other

passages from Exodus, provides a biblical case study as a foundation for proactive succession

planning. Joshua is first introduced in Exodus chapter 17 and was not identified as Moses'

successor until the Lord commissioned it in Deuteronomy chapter 31. What makes this transfer

prominent is that it was comprehensive in nature. Joshua served under Moses for years, learning

his leadership attributes, observing his relationship with God, gleaning an understanding of the

Levitical covenant, and gaining exposure to the nation of Israel, whom he would eventually lead.

The type of exposure Joshua had with Israel is the type of connection a successor needs to be

successful as the future leader. In Deuteronomy 31:7, figuratively speaking, Moses passes his

mantle to Joshua in the sight of all of Israel while encouraging him to be strong and courageous.

Moses sets the tone for Joshua to be accepted as the next leader.

Subsequently, in verse 14, the Lord told Moses to call Joshua to the congregation of

tabernacles, where the Lord also charged and encouraged him, which solidified Moses' selection.

While several succession stories in the Bible are family to family, in this case, Joshua was not

related to Moses and still succeeded him well. For this reason, Moses reminded the people that

God said that Joshua would succeed him years prior, emphasizing both God's and Moses'

approval of Joshua. Howbeit, God's plan for the nation of Israel is not dependent upon one

leader as He has the power within himself to fulfill His covenantal promises.[80] This paradigm

sends a clear message that pastors should recognize the importance of not waiting to train a

successor but realize the urgency to prepare and train the next generation long before their

transition. Undoubtedly, the children of Israel had become accustomed to Joshua's style of

leadership years prior to him taking over. After the death of Moses, God reassured Joshua in the

first chapter that He was with him and that his paths would be successful and prosperous. This

further solidifies that God fully approved Joshua as Moses' successor.[81] If more churches

followed this example, the need for assessing the attitudes and expectations of the laity would

decrease due to following God's succession plan.

As a New Testament reference, Mark 3:13 describes when Jesus selects the twelve

apostles, eleven of which would succeed him in spreading the gospel and leading the church.

Verse 14 further illustrates how He ordains them and gives them the power to preach, heal the

sick, and cast out devils. Mark specifically points out the disciple's association with Jesus during

this time to demonstrate their preparation and training for ministry.[82] He further provided specific

works that the apostles would do, which included: (1) casting out demons which signified Jesus'

authority over Satan's kingdom; (2) they would speak with new tongues in order to communicate

the gospel; (3) they would be protected from hurt and danger; (4) they were given authority to

work miracles such as healing the sick, and they recover.[83] Matthew 7:28-29 also illustrates

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[80] Walvoord and Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, 316.

[81] Peter H. Davids, Nancy L. deClaisse-Walford, and Trent C. Butler, *Word Biblical Commentary*, Vol. 7a (Thomas Nelson, 2017), 217.

[82] Walvoord, and Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, 116.

[83] Ibid., 196.

Jesus' authority as he operated in the same power that he gave the disciples.[84] Like Moses and

Joshua's relationship, Jesus' disciples spent enough time with Jesus to know how he conducted

ministry, how he related to people, and how he desired the gospel to be preached. At His

departure to sit on the right hand of the father, the apostles were trained and well able to continue

the work of Christ. Today, Jesus still appoints and selects whomever He wills for ministry, but it

is the church's responsibility to provide the training based on biblical truths, which leads to the

next scriptural framework.

Apostle Paul and Timothy

Leadership support is further seen in the relationship between Paul and Timothy.

1Timothy 1:2 revealed that Timothy was selected from the congregation to assist in the

leadership of the church. Paul was a spiritual mentor to Timothy, who was potentially converted

under Paul's ministry. In verse 3, Timothy now serves as an extension of Paul and is a ministry

leader at the church in Ephesus. While Paul had the duty of traveling to preach the gospel, he left

Timothy in Ephesus to deal with the work of ministry to debunk false doctrine. Paul's first letter

to Timothy provides insight on those teaching the law ignorantly. Those teachings should not be

used legalistically but within their context, as it was meant to provide guidelines to the lawless

and not the righteous.[85] Paul exemplifies good leadership by encouraging Timothy to continue to

fight the good fight of faith.[86] He further encourages Timothy and the Ephesian church to pray

for world leaders. Peace was needed for the sake of Christians who were to follow God. In

2Timothy 1:3, Paul places further emphasis on his mentorship to Timothy as he encourages him

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[84] R. T. France, Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary, vol. 1, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 25.

[85] Tony Evans, *Tony Evans Bible Commentary*, (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2019), 1278.

[86] Ibid., 1279.

and told him that he was praying for him. He further told Timothy not to fear as he had been

facing persecution. Paul writing Timothy from prison may answer the question of why Timothy

was afraid. Nonetheless, Paul encouraged him to remember that fear is not of God but power,

love, and a sound mind.[87]

As Paul and Timothy's relationship became closer, Paul could see that Timothy's

character was highly valued, and he allowed Timothy to accompany him on the mission trips.[88]

Timothy was able to observe how Paul effectively dealt with church matters and the church's

growth as a result.[89] In 1Corinthians 4:17, Paul sends Timothy to the Corinthians to serve as his

representative. Being that Paul was Timothy's father in the faith, he is now able to serve as a

visible reminder of Paul's ministry, as this was, in essence, spiritual reproduction.[90] Further in

Philippians 2:19-20, Paul expressed his desire to send Timothy to Philippi because he believed

that there was no one else likeminded who could do the job more effectively. Paul had trained

Timothy so well that he was able to send him on missions in his stead.[91] In 1Thessalonians 3:1-2,

Paul again sends Timothy to the Thessalonians that they could receive an authentic touch of flesh

and blood that a letter could not provide. Timothy embodied the same anointing as Paul and was

able to operate as a duly respected leader received by the churches. This is the same spiritual

reproduction that pastors must provide for the next generation of leaders.

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[87] Evans, *Tony Evans Bible Commentary,* 1292.

[88] Ibid., 1094.

[89] Ibid., 1095.

[90] Ibid., 1154.

[91] Ibid., 1263.

Apostle Paul and Titus

As with Timothy, Paul has a similar relationship to Titus, one of Paul's pastoral delegates

working in Crete. In Titus 1:4, Paul nurtured Titus under his ministry as he refers to him as his

true son in the faith. He wanted Titus to help the churches live in a way that reflects the Father's

way.[92] He further outlined to Titus biblical characteristics for him to teach to the church. During

this time, there were false leaders emerging to obtain money dishonestly by deceiving followers

of Christ with the wrong doctrine. As with Timothy, Paul needed Titus to stand out and be a

strong leader in the face of adversity.[93] The significance of this scripture is that Paul's training of

others in ministry is effective. Howbeit, oversight and guidance are critical to their success, and

Timothy and Titus' involvement in ministry was essential for Paul's success.

Ultimate Selection Belongs to God

Jesus and the Twelve Apostles

The second principle for the theological foundation highlights that the ultimate selection

of the next generation of leaders belongs to God. Jesus called twelve apostles of His choice in the

book of Mark chapter three.[94] Besides Jesus' sovereign will, the choice of the disciples selected

has no traceable meaning.[95] Those who are called of God cannot qualify themselves but must be

chosen. These twelve would ultimately lead the church after Jesus' death and ascension to the

Father. In the book of Luke the eighth chapter, Jesus describes how blood relationships do not

prove that a person is following God's word. The twelve disciples were not related to Jesus but

left their families to follow Him. The commentary says that physical birth or environment has

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[92] Evans, *Tony Evans Bible Commentary*, 1302.

[93] Ibid., 1303.

[94] Mark 3:13-15.

[95] R. Alan Cole, Mark: An Introduction and Commentary, vol. 2, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 141.

little to do with a relationship with God, rather one's obedience to His commands.[96] These verses support the understanding that successors and succession plans should be made proactively rather than reactively. Jesus selected the twelve at the beginning of His ministry and trained them throughout the duration. Not only did He not attempt to provide preferential treatment to his family for authoritative roles within His ministry, but the focus was on selecting, training, and commissioning His disciples solely based on divine purpose. Pastors must understand this aspect in order to follow God's plan.

Elijah and Elisha

In 1 Kings 19:15, the Lord tells Elijah to anoint Elisha to succeed him as prophet. Elijah was plowing and tending to the land when Elijah found him. Elijah threw his cloak upon Elisha, which indicated the transfer of power and authority within the prophetic office. Elisha's urgency was evident as he left behind everything to fulfill the mission for which God called him.[97] He followed and trained by Elijah's side for years until he was taken up into heaven.[98] Elijah predicts the death of King Ahab and his wife Jezabel for their evil deeds in 1 Kings 22:14-20. Elisha predicts the end of the siege of Samaria in 2 Kings 7:1-2. The criticality of Elijah transferring his mantle to Elisha is evident as he can continue the work as God designed.[99] Again, this further supports the idea that early and extensive training is important and emphasizes that God selects and anoints those He calls for service. While selecting successor candidates can be

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[96] Trent C. Butler, Luke, vol. 3, *Holman New Testament Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 129.

[97] Ibid., 535.

[98] Ibid., 540.

[99] Daniel Durken, ed, *New Collegeville Bible Commentary: Old Testament*, (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2015), 425.

simply based on resumes, the difficult part comes when not knowing whom the Holy Spirit will select.

David Selected by God as King

Another example is described in 1 Samuel 16:11-13 when Samuel was looking for a successor for David, and though he knew that he would come from the house of Jesse, he did not know which of the eight sons God approved. It was not until the process of passing each son under the horn of oil that Samuel knew whom God selected. Had Samuel not made all eight sons pass through, he would not have known who Saul's successor would be. As such, the church must do its part in the process and trust God to complete it. A similar notion is found in Leviticus 19:15, and the Lord outlines concerns about daily life. One of those instructions is in verse 15, which instructs the Levites to judge righteously, not giving preference to the rich over the poor but being fair. This scripture supports the notion that pastors should follow God's example of being no respecter of a person even during the selection of the successor. Looking for big names and prestige is not the way of the kingdom. First Samuel 16:7 shows this mistake of Jesse by only calling the sons that appeared to fit the part of the king, leaving David out of the equation. But God quickly reminds Samuel not to look on man's outer appearance, as God looks upon the heart. These scriptures emphasize the fact that man alone cannot pick their successor. It is relevant to this project as the current founder of FBC does not know who will succeed him. However, assurance is given through biblical text that God has a successor in line and will reveal in due time.

The Lack of Succession Planning Increases Challenges

Adonijah and David

The third principle for the theological foundation reflects on this project's problem statement, which formulates the idea that failing to conduct succession planning within the church may lead to challenges. As such, the story of Adonijah and David in the first book of Kings is far from a succession plan and reflects the opposite. Verses 7-10 show the result of David not establishing his son Solomon as his successor sooner. His other son Adonijah usurped David's authority due to his old age and made himself King. One of the issues with many pastors today is that once they get to the end of their tenure, there is no one in sight to succeed them, or they did not properly put things in place for a smooth transition. Sadly, Adonijah sought to be king and was almost successful due to his popularity and not a result of being anointed or crowned.[100] He forged great influence over the priests and Levites, a powerful element of the kingdom. It is perceived that the priests and Levite's decision was based upon the realization that Adonijah was next in line to be king.[101] However, it is worth noting that even though there was a certain structure with passing down blessings or seats of leadership through royal blood and the right to the elder sibling, God's plan always focused on the right person according to his will. Some people undoubtedly thought that Adonijah should rightfully succeed his father as he was the elder brother to Solomon. It appears that Jesse believed this to be the case when Samuel came to anoint the next king. He called all his sons except David, the youngest. However, God's election and selection quite frequently violated the natural order of primogeniture.[102] These

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[100] Durken, ed, *New Collegeville Bible Commentary*, 488.

[101] Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible,* vol. 2 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 730.

[102] Walvoord, and Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, 492.

biblical examples are what pastors today need to avoid by proper planning and not rushing to

select unqualified candidates due to a lack of time to prepare. Research shows that one of the

chief roles of a leader is to find and groom new leaders for succession.[103] The element of this

theological foundation illuminates the importance that the proper selection of the next leader

lends to training them early, allowing God to select, developing a plan, and lastly, assessing their

readiness through biblical qualifications.

<center>Biblical Qualifications for Successors</center>

Likewise, the fourth principle for the theological foundation focuses on potential

candidates having met a certain level of biblical qualifications. Admittedly, the selection of

candidates is both a natural and spiritual process. Apostle Paul established a good portion of the

natural process by way of providing leadership qualifications in 1 Timothy 3:2-7 says,

> Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worth of full respect. If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.

Paul highlights an important principle that a person's leadership ability begins at home. Having

the ability to manage one's children is a small but important gesture on their ability to lead a

church. There must be a certain level of respect for one to submit to a leader, and if a child can

accomplish that, then the potential is there to lead others. The text further condemns new

believers in occupying or being appointed to such roles unless they lend themselves to pride as

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[103] Vanderbloemen and Bird, *Next: Pastoral*, 147.

Satan did before time.[104] Paul has laid the groundwork for potential leaders in this set of scripture, including Timothy and Titus. Even though Jewish fathers were responsible for their son's education and the training of the law, Timothy's father was a gentile. By custom, a grandmother would be next for him to learn if she was still alive. But in this case, Paul was his teacher who trained him to continue the mission and follow his path.[105] Not only did Paul train Timothy, but he also taught Titus. In Titus 1:5, Paul has left Titus in Crete to establish the church's leadership. Paul's charge to Titus was to keep pushing the teachings he had learned to keep the church from error.[106]

In both instances, leaders were qualified and trained to continue the ministry's mission. The church must do its part with training qualified candidates and wait on God to do the rest. The church should not lean to the world's leadership understanding as the two do not function the same. Essentially, when the Spirit of the Lord is absent, the world must lean unto their understanding of who would best lead. This is not the case with the church, as the Spirit of God has direct sovereignty in the matter. Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus are further described later in this chapter, where the two of them were encouraged and mentored for the work of ministry.

<div align="center">The Importance of Laity in the Success of Leadership</div>

Research shows three primary stakeholders when it comes to pastoral succession: the predecessor, the successor, and the congregation. All three are seen in this theological foundation in the form of Moses, Joshua, and the Children of Israel. The fifth principle for the theological

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[104] Walvoord, and Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, 737.

[105] Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 618.

[106] Ibid., 625.

foundation is based on the biblical premise that the people have a significant role in the success

of its leader. In Exodus 17:8-16, Moses led the people in military combat. While at Rephidim,

the Lord secured military victory for Israel. The fight was against the Amalekites, who were

attempting to remove them from their territory by way of intrusion. Moses calls on Joshua for the

first time to enter battle, but the victory was only achieved when the staff of God held in Moses'

hands remained above his head. This was a representation of Israel's dependence on the power of

God to turn their enemies over to them.[107]

However, Exodus 17:12 describes when his arms were lowered, it depicted a lack of

dependence, and the enemies started to win. To keep Israel in a victory stance, Aaron and Hur

helped to keep Moses' hands lifted, and Israel prevailed. The understanding here is that a leader

cannot serve alone. The leader must receive assistance from those who follow if the mission is to

be accomplished. It is important to note that Moses' future successor is now present in the battle

where he can be seen by the children of Israel. This is an important aspect of succession

planning. Further biblical support of this concept is found in 1 Corinthians 12, which explains

the importance of many members but one body. The entire group cannot function without the

help of each other, and neither will a house divided will be able to stand as a secure structure.

This biblical principle is depicted in Mark 3:25. Therefore, a leader cannot operate alone but

needs the help of those whom they lead.

Additional scripture references that support this biblical principle are found in Acts 11,

13, and 15. These references describe that the earliest days of the New Testament practiced strong

congregational involvement in the church's decision-making. The twelve apostles would

challenge the entire congregation to elect leaders who could take on duties within the church that

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[107] Walvoord, and Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, 135.

would allow them to focus on spreading the gospel. The ideology around this philosophy was that ministry was everyone's responsibility, although the different levels of the task required varying qualifications.[108]

Theoretical Foundations

Most effective leaders understand that there is no success without a successor. For the leader's work to continue, there must be a qualified conduit in which it is carried. However, despite a successor being qualified, there will almost always be a comparison to the former leader, especially if they were effective. Therefore, one aspect forming the theoretical foundation for this project is based upon research that demonstrates the theory of leader transference. Leader transference is a cognitive process whereby mental representations of previous leaders are activated and used for comparison when a new leader is encountered.[109] This will be geared towards the founding pastor in transition and a proper exit strategy, which will help with the smooth onboarding of his successor when the time comes. It is prudent that the tone of the founding pastor upon departure be open to a new vision and invoke such support to the church prior to onboarding the new leader. Though some parishioners may still be resistant to change, seeing the allegiance of the founder for innovation and change will be critical for a successful pastoral transition. The founder's willingness to embrace this type of change can influence the laity to not become complacent with one form of leading even if the successor has a similar leadership style. In fact, based on research, there were two studies, one where a successor had

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[108] Kenneth O. Gangel, *Acts. Vol. 5. Holman New Testament Commentary*. (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998) 96.

[109] Barbara A. Ritter and Robert G. Lord, "The Impact of Previous Leaders on the Evaluation of New Leaders," An Alternative to Prototype Matching", (Fall 2007), *Journal Applied Psychology* 92 (6) 1683 – 95, https://web-a-ebscohost-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=1&sid=9ed38ce1-5e38-4782-8c48-338a263faf42%40sessionmgr4007.

similar traits to the predecessor, but it led to erroneous generalizations and expectations. In essence, people assumed that there would be little change given the similarities between the two leaders. This type of generalization can promote disappointment and resistance for the new leader if the possibility of a new vision or innovative method of operations is not introduced pre-transition.[110]

The second study shows an additional level of influence related to leadership transference. Here, the results of the study revealed that the anticipation of certain treatment and abuse was subject to transfer from one leader to the next. Alternatively, if the congregants were accustomed to one level of treatment or interaction with the founding pastor, their expectation of the same will be placed on the new leader. However, when a leader is not reminiscent of the former leader, it allows one to form a general leader prototype and expectation.[111] Conversely, this type of leader removes preconceived notions based on observatory behaviors that the congregants were once accustomed to. It leaves the congregation with no other choice but to simply look forward to having a new leader and accept what typically comes without the association of past times. It offers the chance for newness.

Contrarily, when a successor mirrors their predecessor in style and operation, then preconceived judgments are bred.[112] The same style will breed the same expectation. As such, the founding pastor of FBC will be the strongest influence on the attitudes and expectations of the laity. What this pastor desires in the next leader can be projected simply by the standard he holds or the character he possesses, which both can easily be absorbed by those he leads. Therefore, Pastor Rowe's attitude and expectation must reflect openness and embrace innovation as this will

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[110] Ritter and Lord, "The Impact of Previous Leaders."

[111] Ibid., 16.

[112] Ibid., 1683.

influence everyone else. Likewise, if the exiting pastor of any ministry leaves projecting negativity, the new pastor will have difficulty reversing it.

While the first approach focused on the influential nature of leader transference and understanding how the exiting pastor's attitude and expectations can shape the parishioners, the second aspect of the theoretical approach is based on the Psychology of Influence in general. Today people are influenced by their environment, such as what is seen on television, heard on the radio, and even by others. Pligt and Vliek state that one of the most pervasive and recognizable types of influence is from people of no relation in addition to information spread publicly.[113] This theory focuses on the dynamics of the overt expectations of the parishioners of FBC themselves. These overt expectations are generally shared openly and not hidden from plain view. Research surrounding the art of persuasion originally started as an interest in companies developing strategies to inform and influence the general public. The original intent of the research was to simply assess the verbal language of the message for influences as it related to attitudes and behaviors. The focus would soon change, putting a primary emphasis on the process towards analyzing the process involved in persuasion.[114]

At this point, American universities began to examine the effectiveness of propaganda, which involved the characteristics of who is communicating the message, what source was used to transmit the message, the characteristics of the intended recipients, and the level to which their opinions or preferences are influenced as a result. One of the primary findings was that reliability and expertise were top tiers in affecting the attitudes and behaviors of the recipients.[115] The secondary findings involve a four-step process model of persuasion: attention, understanding,

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[113] Pligt and Vliek, *The Psychology of Influence,* 1.

[114] Ibid., 5.

[115] Ibid., 6.

acceptance, and retention. First, people must pay attention to the information within the message, or they cannot be persuaded by information that was not received. Second, the message must be clear and concise. Third, the recipient can reasonably accept or modify their attitude accordingly. The fourth and last step in the process is that the recipient must retain the attitude.[116] Simply interpreted, at the most basic level of the leadership – followership dynamic are ways in which perspectives, messages, and behaviors of a sender/leader or receiver/follower correspond, which can resonate or fail to resonate based on the anticipated resonance.[117]

As it relates to FBC and the inevitable transition of its founding pastor, there must be a plan in place for effective communication. The indication given by this research on persuasion is that if the founding pastor is not the one to communicate and model expectations moving forward, it will be left for the laity to depend on information received by random sources. This aspect of the succession plan is important because misinformation at any level of a pastoral transition can negatively affect the congregation's attitudes and expectations, leaving a tumultuous ministry for the successor to inherit. Therefore, the founding pastor must be the one to set the standard of expectation preparing the entry for a new leader as he would be the most credible person. He must further make clear to the congregation the importance of embracing a new leader and the new vision that comes with it. The first theoretical approach of leader transference weighs heavily on the outcome of the second.

The third aspect of the theoretical foundation surrounds the theory of attitude. Attitude is not just a feeling or private thoughts stored in the mind's memory banks. It is more than just a

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[116] Pligt and Vliek, *The Psychology of Influence,* 7.

[117] Brent D. Ruben and Ralph Gigliotti, *An Introduction to Leadership, Communication, and Social Influence,* Bingley: Emerald Publishing, 2019, 5, https://doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1108/978-1-83867-118-120191004.

personal experience that only affects the person at the moment; it is an experience that can be felt by one person or a group of people due to the same issue with various manifestations of expressions.[118] The way one expresses an attitude reveals the social and historical context of the situation and environment at hand.[119] The first two theoretical foundations focused on leader transference and the impact of influence. This theoretical approach must now dissect how these inferences are received and processed by others in the form of attitude. The interpretation of attitude will always be biased as it relies on a person's selectivity.

Outside of perception, people can choose to select what information they are willing to process or believe, which in turn alters an expected outcome. For example, two witnesses viewing the same car accident, where a black vehicle and a red vehicle approaches an intersection with a four-way stop at the same time. Both vehicles bypass each of their stop signs colliding in the intersection. The black vehicle's speed was slightly higher than the red vehicle. One witness says that both vehicles are at fault because neither adhered to the stop signs. The second witness says that they believe it is the fault of the black vehicle because it was speeding slightly through the stop sign. The second witness ignored that both vehicles violated the law and narrowed in on the black vehicle with a slightly greater speed. Clearly, the second witness was selective about what information would be considered when deciding fault, excluding factors that put the circumstance in full perspective.

When all information is not considered, the chances of biased results increase. Eiser and Pligt state that selectivity is inevitable among human nature, and there is a lack of insight into which the interpretations of events are selective. In other words, there is no direct explanation for

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[118] Eiser and Pligt, *Attitudes and Decisions*, 1.

[119] Ibid., 9.

selectivity or the interpretation thereof besides individuals being from various backgrounds and cultures.[120] Therefore, an emphasis must be on accurately setting the appropriate tone and environment to get the expected result. For this reason, the communicator of information must be a reliable and influential source. If the formation and guidance of attitude can be shaped by effective communication and dependent upon the method of its transmission, then streamlining the language is key. Language is not only used to communicate, but it is used to persuade others to come in line with the same line of thinking.[121]

Understanding this element, FBC must be purposeful in how the exiting pastor communicates the transitional expectations with the congregation. This influence will be monumental in the receptivity and direction for which attitudes will shift. Not only that, but when a successor comes aboard, it is prudent for him to allow the congregants to carry some of the cherished moments of their predecessor. Despite the predecessor's positive influence and encouragement for change, if a successor does not appear to care for the treasures of the past, it can create distrust among congregants, which has to be avoided.

These three aspects of the theoretical foundations set the standard for how successful the congregants will be in the surveying portion of this project. The first aspect evaluates the nature and attitude of the exiting pastor. If the exiting pastor does not have a positive outlook on leaving or cannot identify their next phase, they may negatively impact the church. This leads to the second aspect of the theoretical foundation, which is the theory of influence. Research shows that people will listen to those of reputable character and can be influenced by them. It is important to understand that the influence of a pastor over the congregation of the church can have a large

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[120] Eiser and Pligt, *Attitudes and Decisions*, 2.

[121] Ibid., 16.

impact on their attitudes. Subsequently, the last aspect of the theoretical foundation deals with the ideology of attitude directly. Attitudes can be swayed by false information and what is perceived as truth, especially from a reliable source. Generally, these three foundations are interdependent of each other to ensure effectiveness.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The problem statement of this project is that the Black church has met challenges implementing succession planning, producing negative results such as a poor leadership transition or having no time for a transition. This chapter aims to describe the intervention process to address the problem statement. While research shows no uniformity to succession plans, it can be approached methodically.[122] The methodology for this project is to assess the attitudes and expectations of the parishioners at FBC. The results thereof are to help with the transition of their founding pastor when the time comes. Through this assessment, FBC will determine the best approach to implementing the succession plan, understanding that succession planning has several components. This research only covers the importance of including the church's congregation in such a huge endeavor as a pastoral transition.

More specifically, being that this project is for a founding pastor who currently does not know the identity of his successor, a process of identifying suitable candidates based on a set of criteria was part of the congregant's assessment. The intention of applying this aspect not only assessed the thoughts of the laity, but the same principles can be applied for other churches to utilize. Senior pastors or church boards must remember that today's church is not the church the founding pastor started when approaching the preliminary stages of succession planning. Things have changed, such as the culture, the community, and the church's needs. This in itself can be a disadvantage if there is no assessment of the current climate of the ministry. While selecting a familiar person to succeed the senior pastor may seem ideal, scripture shows that this is not always the case. Howbeit, a familiar face does have a lot of advantages; what needs to be

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[122] Vanderbloemen and Bird, *Next: Pastoral,* 21.

considered is the changing culture of the church, which yearns for innovation and newness; a familiar person must be up to the task of breeding a new vision.[123]

Vanderbloemen suggests that the congregation will follow the senior pastor who is in charge now and the one who will occupy the role in the future. It is the attributes of the senior pastor that attract people to the ministry, someone who can identify with their lifestyle, education level, marital status, age of children, race, and even hobbies. Another point to note is that the difference between the current founding pastor and the new pastor will be one of the biggest predictors of how much the church will evolve over the near future.[124] This information is critical as it will determine the church's health after the departure of the founding pastor, which is why including church members in this transition is vital. A part of navigating through this component will be done using a survey instrument.

Intervention Design

Developing Survey Instruments and Recruiting Participants

The applied research method for this project was to collect information using a triangulating approach employing surveys, questionnaires, and interviews. Data was collected from one group and three individuals. The one group was comprised of the congregants of FBC. The three individuals are as follows: The founding pastor of FBC; Pastor Bob Smith (a pseudonym) of Second Baptist Church (SBC), who successfully transitioned the church to his successor; Pastor Frank Jones (a pseudonym) of Third Baptist Church (TBC) who did not experience a successful pastoral transition. As stated above, the first group assessed was the FBC congregants, who provided information relative to their attitudes and expectations related to the

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[123] Bullock, Your Next Pastor, 69.

[124] Vanderbloemen and Bird, *Next:Pastoral*, 148.

transition of their founding pastor when the time comes. Secondly, information was collected

from the founding pastor of FBC, who provided information as it relates to a successor. It was

important to understand the role of the founding pastor when the transition takes place, so there

is a clear understanding of what the expectations are for the successor. If this was not properly

defined, then the current pastor's outlook on the transition will affect that of the congregation.

Third, information was needed from a pastor and successor who had already experienced a

pastoral transition. Thus, there was an interview with Pastor Bob Smith of SBC, who

successfully transitioned the church to his successor. Then, there was another interview of a

successor, Pastor Frank Jones of TBC, who did not experience a successful pastoral transition.

Collectively, the information received not only supported this project's approach but has the

potential to help serve as relevant information for FBC. All three aspects of collecting

information (FBC pastor and congregants; SBC pastor; TBC successor) included a component of

the research survey model where the researcher had to identify the survey instrument that would

accomplish each task and the relevant information that needs to be collected.[125]

<center>Collecting Data from FBC Congregants</center>

Collecting data from the FBC congregants began with developing a survey instrument

that could be used to evaluate a sample of the general population of FBC. The survey instrument

comprised questions that could measure the tone of FBC's laity related to the subject matter.

Questions were developed that were comprehensive. These questions had to be designed to

extract enough information to evaluate the congregants' thoughts on succession. These questions

were generated based on some of Pastor Rowe's concerns before this project (such as not

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[125] Fowler, *Types of Error*, 116.

knowing who to consider), questions that would help this researcher identify the demographics

of the respondents, and candidate traits found in the literature review. Some of those traits

Vanderbloemen listed were a person having spiritual depth, the interest of the church's mission,

one who matches the culture, having prior leadership experience, and being relational with

others.[126] Each of these characteristics was used in composing the survey questions. Information

collected from these questions contributed significantly to the entire project's success.

Once the questions were composed, they were delivered electronically using an electronic

survey tool, Microsoft Forms. This software offered the ability to compose the questions to

obtain the most comprehensive feedback. The survey used for the general congregation was in

the form of a Likert scale with a multiple-choice format. The benefit of using this type of data

collection tool with a diverse set of individuals was the ability to focus the respondent's attention

on the subject being asked. In addition, research showed that it would increase response times

and willingness to answer questions as they are short responses.[127]

On August 27, 2021, approval was given by the Liberty University Institutional Review

Board to officially conduct the research for this project (See Appendix F). This researcher then

invited individuals within the general congregation to participate in this project's Likert scale

survey portion (See Appendix E). The invitations were sent via email to fifty members of FBC to

solicit their participation in the survey. The email included a summary of the project's intent and

further requested informed consent of their involvement, which had to be voluntary. If the

individuals chose to participate, a link was provided for them to access the survey (Appendix A)

via Microsoft forms.

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[126] Vanderbloemen, *The Pastoral Search*, 192.

[127] Robert Johnson and Grant Morgan, *Survey Scales: A Guide to Development, Analysis, and Reporting* (New York: Guilford Publications, 2016), 2.

One of the major prerequisites in a good survey is knowing what is to be measured.[128] This project's problem was studied by assessing a target population of fifty adult members of FBC to submit a survey administered by Microsoft forms. The fifty members were then divided into four different groups. All four groups answered the same survey questions. The desire was to obtain different perspectives based on the demographic of each group. Group one included ten members who served on the church's ministerial team. This group ranged in different ages but served alongside the senior pastor in leading church operations. Members of this designation typically had the title of either deacon, minister, elder, or associate pastor. This sample provided feedback from the perspective of those leading the church.

Group two within FBC included ten members from the youth department between eighteen and thirty-five years of age. Those within this group were classified as being part of FBC's Youth and Young Adult department and were able to provide insight from the perspective of being a young member of the church. The youth are essentially the future leadership of the ministry as the old generation retires, and their viewpoint on this matter is important for this reason.

Group three within FBC included ten members who have been with the church since its first five to seven years of inception. These members, by default, had the most historical knowledge of the ministry and the most experience with serving alongside the founding pastor. The feedback from this group provided responses holistically utilizing their experience from the past and present with their anticipation for the church's future leadership.

The fourth group within FBC included twenty members from the general congregation. This group was subdivided into four groups of five participants each and covered the ages not

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[128] Johnson and Morgan, *Survey Scales*, 118.

included within the youth department survey group. These four groups included the following

age groups: (1) Thirty-five to forty-five. (2) Forty-five to fifty-five. (3) Fifty-five to sixty-five.

(4) Sixty-five and older. One valuable step in this process was to set a goal of what the survey

was to accomplish.[129] In this case, the survey provided insight from parishioners of all ages,

membership tenure, and ordination level on what they want in a new pastor. Utilizing members

within each of these groups represented the sample frame of the general population of the

church. The sample frame is defined as "the set of people that has a chance to be selected,"[130]

which these four groups apply. All members of the church on the roster had an equal chance to

participate in the study. However, the church randomly submitted email addresses to this

researcher for those who met the above criteria. Once the maximum number of participants was

reached, no other members were invited.

<div align="center">Collecting Data from the Founding Pastor of FBC</div>

The next step was to compose questions that would understand what the current founding

pastor is looking for in a successor and identify what capacity he wants to remain as the

transition unfolds. This component was in the form of an interview via a phone call with Pastor

Rowe. This interview was formatted to require open-ended responses to the questions (See

Appendix B). Another aspect of this phase was fully understanding the direction he wanted to

see the ministry achieve once his successor took over. Once these questions were composed, they

were formatted so that the answers could be scripted into narrated form. This interview aimed to

get specific answers from Pastor Rowe that would expound on his attitude and expectations of

the church moving forward. This component was essential as his response to the transition would

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[129] Johnson and Morgan, *Survey Scales*, 116.

[130] Ibid., 19.

influence the response of the church body.[131] It is important to note that this project component only involved this researcher and the current founding pastor.

<div align="center">Collecting Data from a Completed Transition</div>

The next step was to conduct two separate surveys with Pastor Bob Smith of SBC and Pastor Frank Jones of TBC, who previously completed transitions from their respective ministries. It is important to note that this pastor and successor were not in the same transition but experienced it at different ministries. The key for this step was to evaluate how SBC maneuvered through the succession transition and if they assessed the attitudes and expectations of their congregants. The question then became how these pastors dealt with issues arising from the congregation regarding the transition. Thus, two interviews were conducted: (1) The founding pastor of SBC who retired was interviewed to get his perspective on transitioning the church to his successor and if the parishioners influenced that process. (2) The successor who went through a transition at TBC was interviewed to understand his perspective on the transition and how the congregants affected that process.

<div align="center">Research Timeline</div>

Once the research began, FBC was provided the link to the survey sent to a sample of fifty congregants that met each of the group's criteria. In this case, all fifty respondents replied to the surveys. Each participant had ten days from the date of notification to when the survey was due. Informed consent was also a disclaimer on the survey itself. The typical timeframe to complete the survey was approximately six minutes.

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[131] Johnson and Morgan, *Survey Scales*, 147.

In addition, the founding pastor of FBC was notified by phone to schedule the interview between him and this researcher. The interview was planned based on Pastor Rowe's availability and lasted approximately thirty minutes.

Then, the final interviews involved surveying a pastor and a successor from two different ministries. These individuals were contacted to conduct separate interviews in a questionnaire format. Dates had to be adjusted according to the participant's availability. The interviews were scheduled and conducted virtually by telephone and zoom, respectively. Each interview lasted approximately thirty minutes. Table 1 below outlines the research schedule visually.

Table 1. Research Schedule

Research Timeline	Phase/Task to Accomplish
October 22, 2021	Notified FBC and provided the link for the surveys to be emailed to selected member
October 25, 2021	FBC sent participants of the general membership the email with the link for the survey
November 9, 2021 November 23, 2021	Former Pastor Bob Smith of SBC interviewed Former Pastor Frank Jones of TBC interviewed
November 22, 2021	Deadline for phase one participants to complete surveys
November 23 - 27, 2021	Analyzed data
December 1, 2021 December 5, 2021	Pastor Rowe of FBC interviewed Final Report submitted

Ethical Issues Addressed

While the ethical issues for this project appeared to be minimal, there were still several areas that were monitored and protected closely. The information collected from each participant within any phase of the project was handled confidentially. The first area of concern dealt with the founding pastor's information about his thoughts on transition and timeframes. This information could not be released to the congregants of the church. The results of this project are something that the founding pastor would want to explain to the parishioners himself. To protect this information under this researcher's observation, all data collected was protected by a password that is not shared with others.

The second issue involves the anonymity of the four groups of church members from the general congregation. After the church was notified of the project, a survey link was provided to a random sample of fifty participants meeting the requirement of each group. In order to maintain the anonymity of the parties involved, the church administrative office was used to conduct the survey and as the main point of contact for the church members to inquire about the survey. As such, the project's objectives, subject matter, and anonymity requirements were explained to the staff to help them circumvent any confusion that may arise. This measure minimized and helped to eliminate other members that were not selected from feeling left out of the process. Another aspect that needed to be protected was the subject matter of this project. The disclaimer to participants in the email itself advised that this project was in no way reflecting an imminent transition of their senior pastor. It further read that the project was a prerequisite for this researcher to complete this doctoral program requirement. This component is especially crucial to eliminate panic and chaos within the church as some members are already anxious concerning the founding pastor's transition.

The third issue is related to the participants in phase three, the pastor and successor who had already experienced a transition. The additional assurance of privacy and confidentiality was crucially important for this phase as the responses of the successor could have offended his predecessor. This was especially the case for the senior pastor who transitioned as his successor was his biological son. Certain questions on the survey could have caused discord if not answered desirably or if the answers were not protected. To protect this effort, the researcher did not disclose sensitive information that was not relevant. Additionally, efforts were made to ensure that participants understood that their engagement in this project was completely voluntary and not out of obligation.

The fourth ethical-related issue was to ensure that the questions were clear and concisely stated without ambiguity. One of the negatives of using open-ended questions is that if they were not composed correctly, the respondent would answer the question according to their perception of what they thought was being asked, rather than the designed intention of the question. Research shows that if interview questions are not designed properly, it leaves room for people to misread and or answer the question inadequately. As such, the researcher must then provide clarifications that can perhaps require further probing, which will ultimately influence the answer.[132] This researcher worked closely with the faculty mentor to avoid this survey error by revising any questions that could confuse respondents.

Compiling Results

This researcher used Microsoft forms software to produce the survey and questionnaire for each research step. There was no recording of the zoom videos or phone calls during this portion of the project. However, detailed notes were written according to the following protocol:

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[132] Fowler, *Types of Error*, 138.

The date, time, and place of the interviews were written as well as the detail of the respondents' sensory expressions to the questions such as facial expressions, sounds, and emotion that could draw further emphasis on the answer recorded. These notes were also taken on the computer's notepad, protected by a password.

All responses were compiled into an analytic form which showed an analysis of the survey data. The goal of all phases was to collect data without bias. According to Fowler, a project bias would be if the individuals responding to the survey do not represent the general congregation.[133] To avoid this type of sample error, surveys were provided to a sample group comprised of various congregation members. However, biases were not completely avoidable as some members would have preconceived notions based on personal history or experience with the founding pastor.

Implementation of Intervention Design

The implementation of the intervention design was achieved in a systematic, step-by-step approach. It was essential to outline how data would be collected and any techniques relevant to its analysis. The design was careful to include parameters to ensure that data collection was not compromised. The project's accuracy depended upon the respondent's truthfulness to the subject matter. Not only did their truthfulness give confidence to the founding pastor to use the data to implement succession planning, but research showed that it also gives a sense of trustworthiness to other ministries who desire to use the same principles.[134]

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[133] Fowler, *Types of Error*, 13.

[134] Elizabeth A. Wager, "Credibility," *Archives of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine* 138, no. 7 (July 2014): 874.

Data Triangulation

Surveys, questionnaires, and interviews were used in this intervention design to achieve

data triangulation. This phenomenon of triangulation is simply using several techniques to

provide the same understanding.[135] Surveys involve the process of asking questions from a

written or electronic format that can be done without an interview. Questionnaires are used to

describe a set of questions to be asked during an interview. The sample size of fifty individuals,

comprising of FBC congregants, responded to the survey questions on the Likert scale. Then, the

founding pastor of FBC was interviewed and answered a questionnaire conducted by this

researcher. Similarly, the respondent, a founding pastor who transitioned SBC over to his son as

successor, also participated in a questionnaire by way of interview. In addition, the successor of

TBC also participated in a questionnaire. While all the pastors interviewed were all male leaders

from different ministries, participants from the sample population of fifty consisted of males and

females of all ages over eighteen who are current members of FBC. The researcher also kept a

well-documented log of the interviews with dates, times, and field notes during the project.

Data Collection

The data collected from the fifty respondents were to assess the attitudes and expectations

of the congregation from FBC. They were divided into four groups detailing specific

demographics: (1) Ten members of the ministerial team. (2) Ten members of the youth

department between eighteen and thirty-five. (3) Ten members who have been with the church

since the first few years of inception. (4) Twenty members divided into age different age groups

above thirty-five. The subsequent information collected came by way of a phone call with the

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[135] Alyssa Appleman and Shyam Sunder, "Measuring Message Credibility Construction and Validation of an Exclusive Scale," *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 93, no. 1 (Mar 2016): 61.

founding pastor of FBC and the former successor of TBC. In contrast, the data collection method

for the founding pastor of SBC was via a zoom video. Once that information was analyzed, it

gave an idea of what the congregants anticipate when the founding pastor transition.

The questions for the surveys, questionnaires, and interviews were comparable to data

collected from similar projects, which Fowler suggests will add to the generalizability of the

research. He further states that all questions should be tested to ensure that they work for the

population, context, and goals of this study. It is also suggested that consulting with potential

respondents will help develop good survey questions.[136] However, for this project, respondents

were not consulted due to the nature of the information and the need to avoid confusion over the

subject matter.

To implement the data collection, the researcher followed an outline that ensured there

would be clarity from all angles. Before notifying the church, the researcher received permission

from the founding pastor to begin the project. This was achieved through a verbal conversation

asking for approval to utilize the church members for this project. Once that was accomplished,

the church's administrative office was notified to randomly select members who meet the criteria

listed earlier in this chapter. Being that the pastor's segment of the project incorporated

interviews, it was ideal to identify them as qualitative data collection. These interviews allowed

this researcher to ask follow-up or clarification questions concerning any answer provided. This

element is also built upon the triangulation principle of data collection.

Subsequently, the use of open-ended questions for the interviews assisted in compiling

broader responses from the participants. The three sets of questions designed separately for the

founding pastor of FBC, the founding pastor of SBC, and the successor of TBC are included in

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[136] Fowler, *Type of Error*, 118.

Appendices B, C, and D, respectively. An advantage of using Microsoft forms for the survey instrument was that it reported the information back to this researcher in qualitative and quantitative form for each set of questions. It further offered the ability to export the data into excel format for better organization. The intent for all the questions was to focus on participants' responses and develop themes. The IRB approved this as a quality improvement project; the questions were tailored to the participants to directly correlate to the project's purpose.

<div align="center">Process of Analyzing Data</div>

After the data was collected, the process of properly analyzing this information from the respondents was key. Fowler states that it is not uncommon for the sample frame not to be perfectly matched with the entire population the project represents, in this case, the congregation. Undoubtedly, all church members would desire to have some input in the selection of their new pastor, but it is impractical with a church of this size. However, what is commonly accepted is that the collection of certain demographics of the nonrespondents be established as variables.[137] This was not done for this project as the sampled group greatly reflects the general population. As such, this information was compiled and sorted into graphs as it had to be translated into a form that the computer could analyze.

This researcher's approach to analyzing the data sat upon the foundation of the "Grounded Theory," which allows for reformulation of definitions based upon lived experiences of participants that emerged during data collection. It further utilizes interviews with open-ended questions, allowing the researcher to extract the true tone of the respondents' answers.[138] This method also uncovered themes that correlate around social relationships or behavioral dynamics.

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[137] Fowler, *Type of Error*, 154.

[138] Amalia Cochran, William B. Elder, and Leigh A Neumayer, "Characteristics of Effective Mentorship for Academic Surgeons: A Grounded Theory Model," *Annals of Survey* 269, no. 2 (Feb 2019): 269 -270.

To conduct the analysis process, this researcher began reading the responses from the collected data and reviewed narration documented from the interviews conducted. The goal was to discover any themes between the three separate pastoral interviews that would further emphasize the need to include the laity in succession transitions. Whether the responses were similar or widely different, the data is still useful for analysis. One important aspect of analyzing the data was to intensely review the notes regarding the emotions and bodily expressions, which could also contribute to an overall theme.

A part of analyzing the data for certain themes related to the pastoral interviews relied on this researcher identifying certain terminology or thought processes that present certain truths to support this project's purpose. The themes were analyzed based on the research sample for the interviews, which included a current founding pastor, a former founding pastor, and a successor now serving as a senior pastor. These three interviews were based on open-ended questions; each yielded its perspective on the subject. Interview notes were detailed enough to recall crucial trends parallel to previous research.

As it relates to the closed-ended questions being sent to the laity, this researcher also evaluated responses to determine if there was a common theme(s) and if there is a connection(s). Since the first phase of the data collection involved fifty participants of different ages, this aspect of the analysis had to be done methodically. Through repeated line-by-line reviews of the data, the researcher determined if there were themes that were linked to age groups or if there was a set tone from all participants having the same attitude or expectation regarding their senior leader's transition.

The data analysis sequence followed five components to developing analysis from surveys and questionnaires: formatting, code designing, coding, data entry, and data cleaning.[139] The formatting component ensured that all data pertaining to a particular interview or survey was organized for completeness, making for easier interpretation.[140] Once all the data was organized, the responses were coded to assign numbers for questions that were too long to put in graph form. The key to code design is to consistently use the same code for the same category for each sub-group.[141] After code design, the actual coding and data entry step was implemented when the respondents' answers were converted into a numeric format.[142] The final component was data cleaning, which ensured that all the information was correct.[143] This process consisted of this researcher conducting a final review of the raw data to ensure accuracy in comparison to the information in the final report.

Conclusion

The findings of this project must be reported accurately. According to Fowler, it is a good methodological description when the target population best describes the general body from which the sample was drawn. More importantly, it is crucial that those reviewing the reported findings understand the procedures of how the data was collected.[144] For this reason, the sample taken from the total congregation represented church members from multiple auxiliaries, positions, ages, and tenure. These individuals were chosen based on the criteria outlined for the

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[139] Fowler, *Type of Error*, 145.

[140] Ibid., 146.

[141] Ibid., 147.

[142] Ibid., 148.

[143] Ibid., 152.

[144] Ibid., 171.

subgroups. Essentially, the analysis provided an overall theme as to why it is important to assess

the attitudes and expectations of parishioners in the church leadership transition.

Chapter 4: Results

The goal of this project was to assess the attitudes and expectations of congregants whose senior pastor is in transition at First Baptist Church in Baltimore, Maryland. This chapter addresses the problem that Black churches have failed to implement succession planning, producing negative results. As previously mentioned, including laity within the succession planning process is simply one component. The study intended to show that when senior pastors include laity within the succession planning process, it allows them to feel a part of the decision-making and produces information that the pastor can use to effectively train leaders, which would not be available otherwise. The congregation makes up the general body of the church, and having their expectations of the next leader documented is an innovative shift. With this documented understanding of the parishioners, FBC can revisit the succession plans that are in place to include the feedback from this final report. While the surveys addressed a sample of the general population, the breakdown of the sub-groups was a good representation of the population. Based on these survey results, the data collected revealed that all participants do not have the same attitudes and expectations related to the transition of their senior leader.

The survey consisted of eight multiple-choice questions that provided the researcher with an informed understanding of the participant's attitudes and expectations. The questions were designed to assess if certain answers had a relationship based upon age, membership tenure, or a ministerial position. In addition, fifty percent of the questions were designed from the standpoint of successor qualification themes such as desired age, personality, seminary education level, and marital status. These focus areas directly correlate with the church's current culture and its anticipated culture moving forward. Twenty percent of the questions were designed to deal with the desired transitional timeframe and notification related to the pastor's successor. These

questions provide data on what the congregants expect regarding being notified of a new successor and how long they believe it would take to effectively acclimate this person with the church. The last twenty percent of the questions solely focused on the demographics of the respondents by way of age and membership status at FBC. Collectively, the survey questions help build a consensus on how to approach the remaining succession process.

Survey Results

The FBC congregants survey comprised eight questions that assessed their attitudes and expectations for when their founding pastor transitions. All fifty respondents that the survey was sent responded. The survey results were routed directly to this researcher. The total outline of each question is listed in the actual survey presented in Appendix A.

Question #1. What is a healthy time frame that you believe it will take for the founding pastor of your church to transition when a successor is selected in the future?
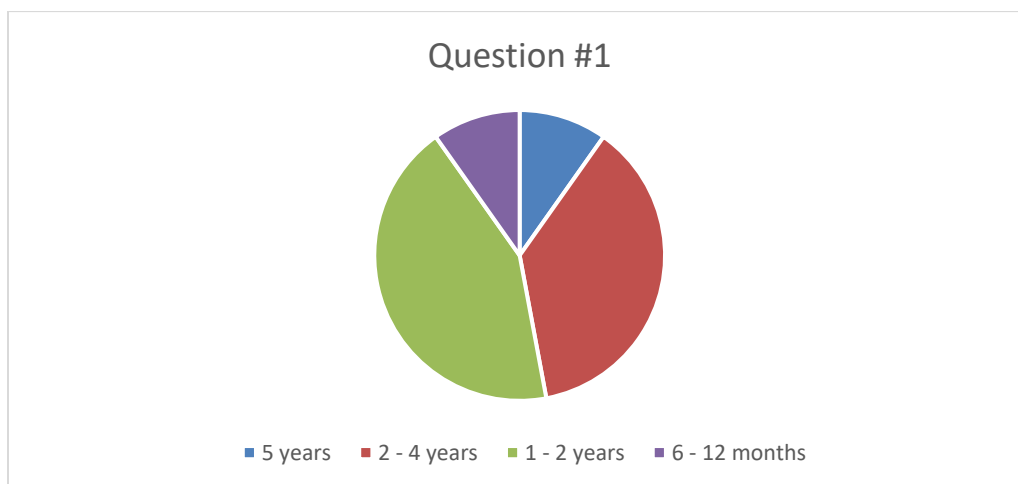

Figure 1. Survey Question One Chart Display

Of the fifty respondents, five church members or 10% thought a sufficient transition period for the founding pastor is five years; nineteen or 38% selected two to four years; twenty-two or 44% selected one to two years and five members, or 10% believed six to twelve months

was a sufficient timeframe. This question focused on assessing how long it will take for congregants of FBC to get acclimated with their new leader and the exit of their former. It is evident that the consensus for a sufficient transition period is between one and four years, with 82% of the respondents selecting this timeframe.

Question #2. When the time is right, do you think the founding pastor's successor should reflect the same education level?
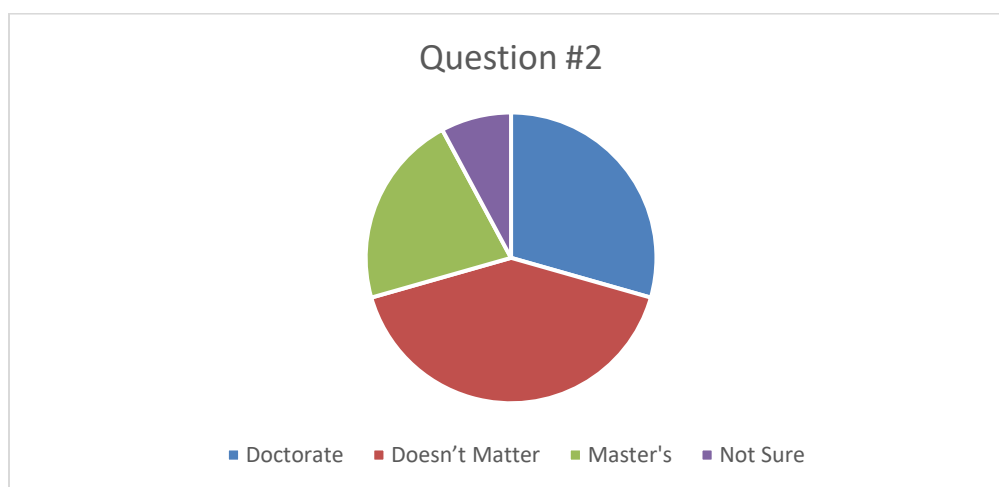

Figure 2. Survey Question Two Chart Display

The purpose of this question was to assess whether respondents desire their new pastor to hold the same level of education as the founding pastor. Fifteen or 30% of the respondents selected Doctoral level; twenty-one or 42% of the respondents selected that the education level did not matter; eleven or 22% members believe that the successor should at least have a master's degree, and four were not sure. While twenty-one or 42% of surveyors selected that the education level did not matter, twenty-six or 52% thought an education level at the master's level or above is needed.

Question #3. What age group would you desire the founding pastor's successor to be?
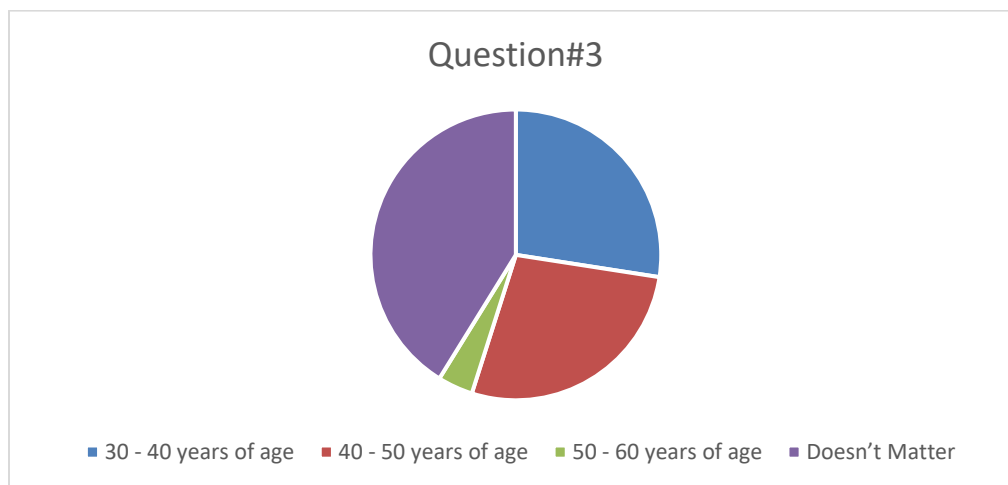

Figure 3. Survey Question Three Chart Display

This question assessed the congregants' thoughts on what they believed the successor's age range should be. Fourteen or 28% selected thirty to forty years of age; another fourteen or 28% selected forty to fifty years of age; two or 4% selected fifty to sixty years of age and twenty-one or 42% selected that the age of the successor did not matter. These answers assessed if age matters to this congregation, and twenty-one out of fifty, or 42%, do not think it does. However, thirty-two or 60% believe it matters but within certain ranges as itemized above.

Question #4. In your opinion, who would be the most ideal candidate to succeed the founding person?
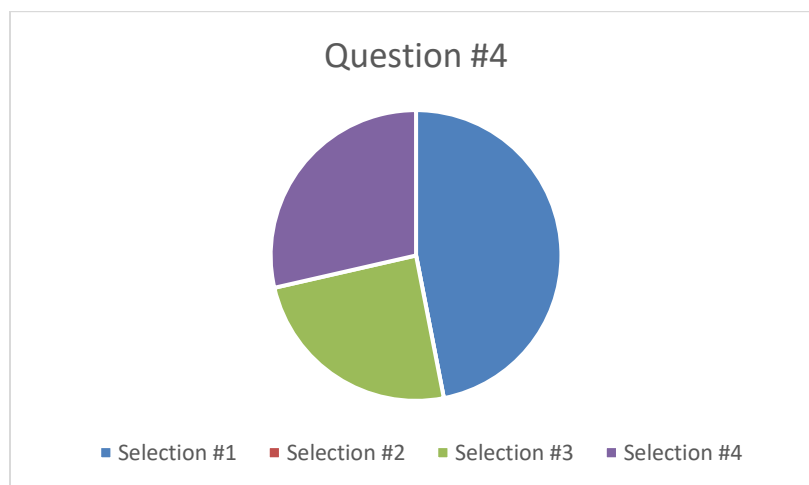

Figure 4. Survey Question Four Chart Display

This question assessed the parishioners on what personality and leadership style they desired the new pastor to have. Twenty-three or 46% of respondents selected option #1, which says, "someone who has been a member of the ministry for years and has a similar personality, leadership/teaching style and heart as the founding pastor; and one who is full of the Spirit of God. None of the respondents selected option #2, which says, "someone from another ministry." Twelve members or 24% selected option #3, which says, "it doesn't matter as long as they can teach and preach the word of God." Fourteen or 28% of the members selected option #4, which says, "someone who is a member, has a different personality, leadership/teaching style and has a heart as the founding pastor but is full of the spirit of God." The answer provides an understanding of what the parishioners desire in the leadership style and personality of the new pastor. All fifty or 100% of the respondents answered that a person from another ministry would not be the ideal successor.

Question #5. Would you prefer the founding pastor's successor to be _____?
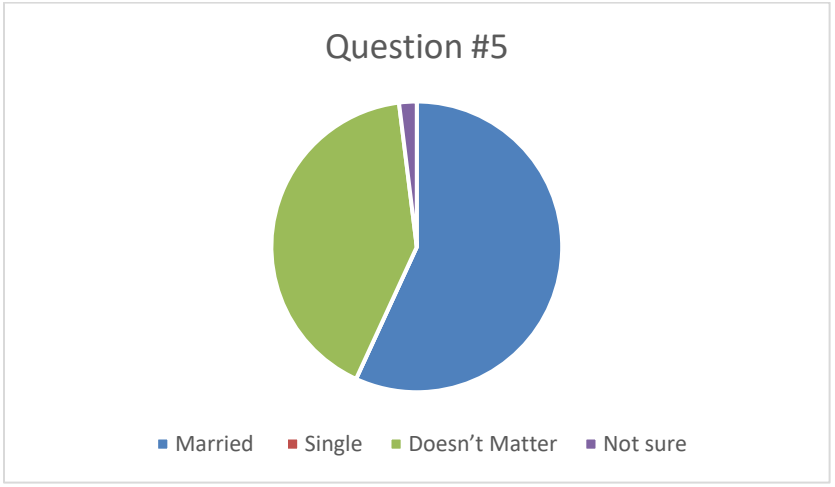
Figure 5. Survey Question Five Chart Display

This question assessed the congregants' thoughts on the desired marital status for their future pastor. Twenty-nine or 58% desire the successor to be married; no surveyors selected single; twenty-one or 42% selected that marital status did not matter. While twenty-nine or 58% of the total respondents desire a married pastor, twenty-one or 42% believe that the marital status did not matter. These answers give a perspective that these parishioners are family-oriented but are also flexible to whatever marital status the successor may have.

Question #6. What is your expectation of how soon the congregants should be notified when a successor is identified?

Question #6

- Immediately
- When the founding pastor decides
- Within 6 - 12 months of selecting a successor
- Not sure

Figure 6. Survey Question Six Chart Display

The purpose of this question was to assess the respondents' expectations on the timeframe in which the founding pastor should notify the church when a successor is identified. Fifteen or 30% of the respondents selected "immediately" while twenty-two or 44% selected "when the founding pastor decides." A small number of nine or 18% of surveyors selected that they would like to be notified within six-twelve months, and three or 6% were not sure. The consensus seems to allow the founding pastor to decide on the notification timeframe.

Question #7. What is your age range?
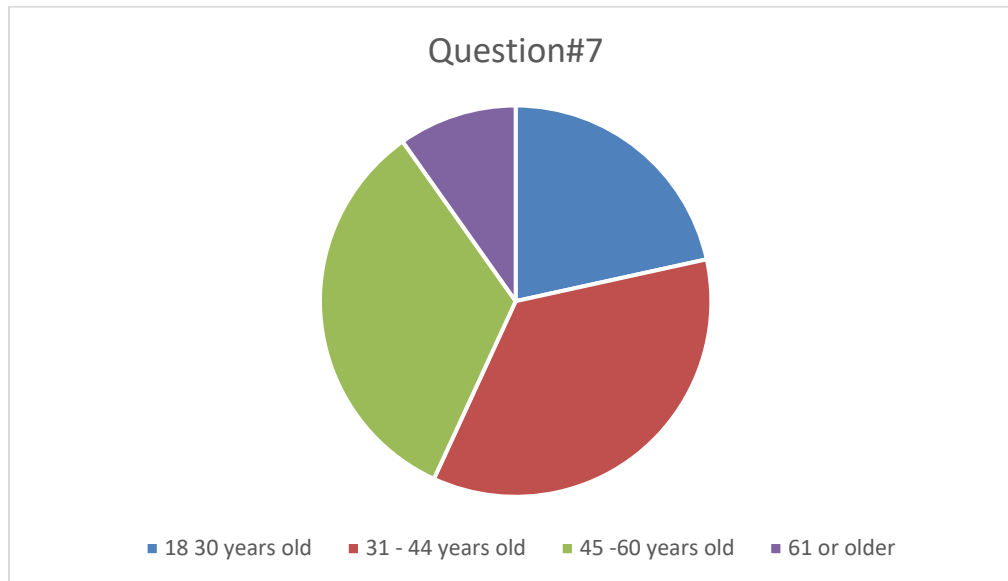
Figure 7. Survey Question Seven Chart Display

This question serves the purpose of identifying the respondents' desired age range for the successor. Ten or 20% of respondents selected eighteen to thirty years of age; eighteen or 36% selected thirty-one to forty years of age; seventeen or 34% selected forty-five to sixty years of age and five or 10% selected 61 years of age or older. The relevance of the participant's age as it relates to the questions asked help to determine if there is a noticeable pattern or trend that could categorize the desired results due to age. That analysis is outlined in the next section.

Question #8. Which category best applies to you?

Figure 8. Survey Question Eight Chart Display

       Question number eight is another demographic question that helps to identify the category in which the respondents belong. Twenty-four or 48% o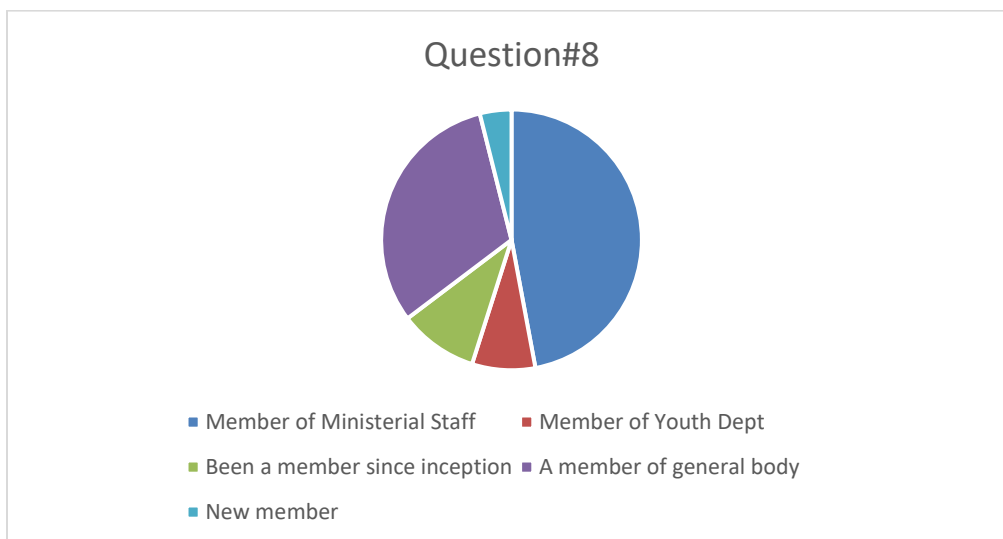f members were on the ministerial staff; four or 8% identified themselves as being part of the youth department; five or 10% were members since the inception of the ministry; sixteen or 32% were members of the general body, and two or 4% were new members of the church. This sample pool's diversity helps collect information that represents the general body. Though four respondents identified themselves as part of the youth department, eleven or 22% of the total respondents are within the youth department age range.

Survey Results by Age

       To assess whether the respondent's age was a factor in the results of survey questions one through six, this section determines if there is an identified pattern or trend based upon an age group. There were ten respondents within the age group of eighteen to thirty years old. This group represents the youngest participants and is considered the millennials of FBC. As it relates to a sufficient transition period, all five or 50% of members believed that a one-to-two-year

transition period was sufficient, while the other 50% chose two to four years. The thirty-one to forty-four age group consisted of eighteen members, where eight or 44% selected that a one-to-two-year transition period, while nine or 50% chose two to four years and one or 2% selected five years. The forty-five to sixty age group totaled seventeen surveyors, twelve or 70% believes that a one-to-two-year transition period is sufficient while the remaining thought two or more years was needed. The sixty-one and older age group consisted of four individuals, and two or 50% thought five years was sufficient, one or 25% of this group thought two to four years, and the last one or 25% believed one to two years was decent. After reviewing all four age groups, it appears that the older age groups desire a longer transition period. It could be due to some of them knowing the founding pastor longer than some younger members.

The next question assessed the respondent's thoughts on the successor's education level. Five or 50% of the eighteen to thirty age group agreed that education level did not matter, while the other four or 40% suggested that at least a master's degree is needed. Eight or 50% of the thirty-one to forty-four age group agreed that education level was not important. The other eight or 50% thought that a master's level education would be prudent, while two or 11% were not sure. The forty-five to sixty age group had twelve members, or 70% agree that education matters from the master's level and above, with eight or 47% suggesting doctoral level is needed. The other five, or 29%, did not think education level mattered. The final age group of sixty and older had a fifty-fifty split, with half desiring the successor to have a doctorate and the half agreeing that it did not matter. After reviewing and comparing these results, it appears that the younger the age of the respondents, the level of education was not an important factor. However, the older respondents agreed otherwise.

When having to decide on the ideal age of the future successor, five or 50% of the millennials thought someone thirty to forty years of age would be ideal. Four or 40% did not think that the age of the successor mattered, while one suggested that the ideal age would be forty to fifty years of age. The thirty-one to forty-four age group had seven or 38% select the thirty to forty age group; six or 33% selected the forty to fifty age range, while five or 27% agreed that age did not matter. Nine or 52% of the forty-five to sixty age group selected that the age of their future pastor does not matter. Four or 23% selected the forty to fifty age range and an even split of 11% for the other age ranges. The sixty and over age group had a fifty-fifty split; two or 50% of the respondents suggest the ideal age range would be forty-fifty years of age, while the other two or 50% agreed that age did not matter. The assessment of results for this question shows that the younger the respondents, the lower the age range selected for the desired age of the church's future successor.

The question relating to the leadership and personality style of the future pastor showed that four or 40% are looking for someone who has a different leadership style than the founding pastor. There is a fifty-fifty split where three or 30% did not think it mattered while the other 30% thought someone of similar leadership and personality style would be prudent. Seven or 38% of the thirty-one to forty-four age group selected a different leadership style; six or 33% selected the same leadership or personality style, and five or 27% thought it did not matter. Eleven or 64% of the forty-five to sixty age group thought that the successor's leadership and personality should be similar; four or 23% selected that it did not matter, while two or 11% agreed that a difference between the two would be ideal. Two or 50% of the sixty and over age group thought someone with a different leadership style would be ideal, while one thought that it did not matter and the other believed having a similar style would be good. Looking at the four

age groups related to this question, it appears that there is a split between having a new pastor with the same or different leadership style.

Regarding the successor's marital status, six or 60% of the eighteen to thirty age group selected that it did not matter, three or 30% selected married, and one or 10% was not sure. Eleven, or 61% of the thirty-one to forty-four age group, agreed that the successor should be married, while the other seven or 38% thought it did not matter. Thirteen or 76% of the forty-five to sixty age group believed that the successor should be married, while four or 23% thought it did not matter. Three or 75% of the sixty and older age group agreed that marital status did not matter, while one or 25% thought being married was prudent. Upon reviewing the ages and results of this question, it appears that the two middle-aged groups thought that the successor being married would be ideal, while the younger and older group did not think it mattered.

The last question to evaluate if age produced a particular trend was the timeframe congregants thought would be ideal for the founding pastor to notify the church once a successor is identified. Four or 40% of the millennials believed that the church could be notified whenever the founding pastor decides, another four or 40% thought it should be done immediately, while two or 20% believe six months to a year was a healthy timeframe. Eight or 44% of the thirty-one to forty-four age group agreed that a six-to-twelve-month notification period was sufficient. Six or 33% of this group thought whenever the founding pastor notifies, and four or 22% desire to be notified immediately. Eight or 47% of the forty-five to sixty age group selected when the founding pastor decides, while six or 35% wanted to be made aware when the successor was identified, and three or 17% were unsure. Three or 75% of the sixty and older group approves of being notified when the senior pastor decides, while one or 25% desire an immediate

notification. It appears that the two old age groups are willing to wait until the founding pastor announces, while the younger two groups selected a more restrictive timeframe. Collectively, this data showed the following main ideas: (1) What the parishioners desire in a future leader. (2) What timeframe do the congregants believe is a reasonable transition period. (3) How laity feels about their senior pastor transitioning in general. These three pillars provided enough information that generally expresses how the members of FBC feel about this matter.

Interview Results

There were three interviews conducted: one for the founding pastor of FBC, one for a pastor who successfully transitioned his church (SBC) to a successor, and one for a pastor who was a successor who did not have an effective transition (TBC). These interviews provide three distinct perspectives of pastoral transition. While each provides different viewpoints, there is a consensus that congregants offer useful feedback for preparing and maneuvering through the transition period. The following is an outline of the results of the interviews:

Table 2. Interview results with the Founding Pastor of FBC

Question	Answer
1. Outside of God's approval, what are you looking for in a successor? Does education level matter?	Someone who has a real love and commitment to God, genuine in their relationship with the Lord. Have a basic understanding of what ministry is all about. That will respect the founding pastor. Love God, love his people, one that exhibits his people. To have some ability in business administration but not necessary. Enough education to properly teach and preach the word of God.
2. How many more years do you prefer to pastor full-time?	Three to five years.

3. What do you see being a sufficient timeframe for a transition when a successor is identified?	In general, one to two years. It depends upon the person selected, how acclimated the congregants are with them and how familiar the successor is with the ministry.
4. What would that transition period look like?	Shifting more responsibility to the successor. More time to speak at services. To get the successor more acclimated with the operations of the ministry.
5. What role would you take after the transition is complete?	On one hand, I desire to be there on and off, to take a step back to allow the successor to manage the ministry. On the other hand, the people would like to see the founding pastor present for a sense of comfort in the early stages. It will depend on the climate of the church at the time.
6. Will your successor have full autonomy of leading the ministry thereafter? How would you be certain that is the case?	Yes, they will have the ability to fully lead the ministry. I will not be one that will be in the way. My plan is not to be present for others to rely on.
7. How will you prepare the congregants for this transition?	A part of his preparation will not be in announcement form. I believe the successor should be evolved, by speaking, by being engaged in ministry, and being connected to the people. That is the best way to prepare the congregants.
8. Are you concerned that the vision that you have for the ministry will be lost once a successor takes over?	I am, developing the total person in the community is a huge vision of the church based upon the great commission. It's a biblical vision and not a founding pastor's vision. It will always be relevant; the successor can execute how he or she desires but not lose the biblical foundation of the great commission.

9. What do you want to see your successor accomplish in the years to come after the transition?	First, to use wisdom and not change everything at once. Second, to maintain the biblical standard of holiness, and third, to make changes in increments.
10. Do you believe assessing the attitudes and expectations of congregants is relevant regarding pastoral succession?	It does matter; what they think and feel will depend upon how they will act upon it. Knowing their expectations also helps the church triage the situation to the best of its ability.

The interview with the founding pastor of FBC[145] provided answers that were directly related to the information found in this research. When asked what he was looking for in a successor, the founding pastor was certain that his successor had to be appointed by God. In addition, he desires his successor to have a strong spiritual acumen with God. While having the ability to lead the administration component of the church is needed, that is not the primary qualification. The person needs to love the people, have a stable relationship with God, and teach and preach God's Word. This directly aligns with one of the theological foundations of this project, where Paul outlined the qualifications of an overseer in First Timothy. He further advised that he believes that he will be transitioning from being senior pastor within the next three to five years. Once the successor is identified, he said depending upon his acclimation with the church and the people will depend on the length of transition time needed.

Once the successor is in place, the plan is to shift more of the leadership and senior pastoral duties to the successor and allow him to speak more frequently during Sunday morning services. During the week, this person will become more familiar with the daily operations and administration of the church, which would entail leading meetings and working with the day

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[145] Pastor James Rowe, interview by author, Baltimore, MD, December 1, 2021.

staff. It was reasonably presumed through prior conversations that Pastor Rowe would remain as a board member after the transition, but the interview revealed otherwise. Regarding his role after the transition, he advised that he wants his involvement to be very little as there are other things that he wants to do in ministry. He further suggested that it also depends on the climate of the church as the congregant may look to him as comfort in the earlier stages, which may require his presence. Besides that, he foresees himself withdrawing from the ministry. This positioning will also allow the successor to operate as the senior pastor without interference. He does not plan on making an announcement once he identifies a successor, but he will position this person to where most will become acclimated over time. Once the final transition approaches, then the announcement will come. This aligns with the congregant's survey responses, which generally revealed that they could wait until the founding pastor feels it is time to notify the church of the transition.

A concern of this founding pastor was also the concern of the pastor of SBC, who had already transitioned. They were both concerned about modifying or eliminating the foundation the church was built upon. FBC's pastor is open to change, but not abruptly or in the absence of the church's vision. He further expounds that the church's vision was derived from the Great Commission and that it is not just a vision of his but can be adopted by whoever takes over. He said he would encourage his successor to lead the ministry and use wisdom to make changes in increments as the successor wills. The primary factor most important to the founding pastor is praying that the successor will continue to preach the Word of God unreservedly. This founding pastor's answer to the final interview question would either solidify or nullify this project's research. The question was if the topic of this project was helpful for him in the preparation of his pastoral transition. He replied that assessing FBC's congregants' attitudes and expectations

matters, as people will act upon their thoughts. His assessment here is accurate as the research

shows that if the communication concerning this matter is not translated properly, the laity will

act upon perception. Lastly, he advised that having this feedback from fifty congregants will give

the church an idea of how to approach each subject matter.

Table 3. Interview Results for Pastor of SBC

Question	Answer
1. Age (range) when transitioned from being the senior pastor?	Sixty-five
2. What was your level of education, and did you attend seminary? How relevant was education for the path of senior pastoring?	Ph.D. in Theology. This seminary degree was important in order to properly teach, preach and lead God's people in the Word of God.
3. Were you ever concerned that your vision for the ministry would be forgotten? How did you assure full autonomy was given to your successor to lead the ministry?	(a)This is a good question! I was not concerned about my vision being forgotten but how quickly it would be modified. (b) I had to be intentional. I intentionally chose what meetings to attend and not to attend, deliberately pointing people back to the successor; I made public statements to the congregation that I was no longer the senior pastor and gave affirmation to the successor. Even today, there are business meetings that I do not attend, so people will not look to me for answers but to him.
4. When did you realize that it was time to transition?	Wow, another good question [Holds head]. Unknowingly I pulled my son and his wife from their jobs, meeting their full-time salary to work at the church. My son served as an executive pastor and his wife as the church administrator. I knew I was grooming him but didn't

	know when it would happen. Fast forward seven years, the Lord said to me one day, the time is now to transition, and that's what we did.
5. Did you have a succession plan prior to the transition?	Somewhat yes, there was a draft of a plan ready to be tailored to the candidate who would be selected as the successor.
6. What were the deciding factors for selecting this successor over other candidates?	Well, I have many spiritual sons, all of whom would have made great candidates. However, the Bible shows a pattern of father-son successions, which is a pattern of God. I began to look at my three biological sons, where my youngest was not ready, and my oldest was working in another area in ministry. Then, my middle son was the one who was ready and prepared, which we did.
7. Was the decision inclusive of the congregation, or was it a church board decision?	No, because ultimately, it was God's decision. Yes, from the perspective that it was seven years of transitioning, and the congregants had time to adjust, embrace and approve the new leadership, which they did.
8. Did you remain on the church's board of directors after the transition? If so, what was the reason?	Yes, I remained on the board because a lot of the church's financial support, investments, and power came from me as the founder. So, to continue those investments with stakeholders, I remained a part.
9. How long was the transition period?	Seven years.
10. Were you ever concerned with not finding the right person to succeed you?	I really was not, I knew that the Lord would provide someone for the continuation of His work, and I knew that I would not be a senior pastor forever, that there was another mantle for me to take in ministry. I never doubted

	as I was assured that the work of the Lord had to move forward.

The second interview was with Pastor Bob Smith of SBC, who successfully transitioned.[146] The age of this senior pastor at transition was sixty-five years which is the average retirement age of pastors.[147] When asked about formal seminary education, he explained that he had a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Theology, which was important to leading God's people. He had been pastoring for thirty-five years before transitioning the church to his son. He knew that his son would eventually succeed, but he did not know when. Seven years prior to the transition, he hired his son and his son's wife and gave them full-time jobs within the ministry. He advised that he knew it was time to transition the church when the Holy Spirit told him in the summer of 2013. The church was acclimated with his son operating as the executive pastor and fully anticipated the succession by this point.

When asked if he was ever concerned about the vision for the ministry being lost, he advised that he was not concerned about it being lost, but he was however worried about how it would be modified. That modification could result from different elements, but the focus was on giving his successor full autonomy to keep the ministry on track. Being intentional was the crucial element to ensuring a successful leadership transference. This pastor advised that members of the congregation would still turn to him for advice and certain permissions, but he had to redirect. In fact, on a few occasions, he recalls standing before the church, reminding everyone that he was no longer their senior pastor and that his role had changed. Senior pastors who remain at the ministry after transition must both agree to a culture of mutuality of honoring

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[146] Pastor Bob Smith, interview by author, Baltimore, MD, November 9, 2021.

[147] Vanderbloemen and Bird, *Next: Pastoral*, 22.

one another with clear guidelines of authority.[148] In this case, the founding pastor remaining on the church board fared better for the church than not.

In addition, when asked what the primary factors were in selecting his son over other candidates, he stated the number one factor was God's selection. Additionally, he had other spiritual sons who qualified, but God reminded him of the patterns of father-son succession throughout the Bible. When asked if the congregation had a part in the selection process, he said while pondering, "not necessarily as God had already made the selection, it was just the need to get them acclimated to what the Lord willed."

One of the pressing points made within this research concerning succession was the status of the senior pastor after the transition. Vanderbloemen states that an outgoing pastor who remains at the ministry still has control and influence even with their non-verbal cues and gestures.[149] As such, when this pastor was asked about his involvement on the church board, he made the point that his participation was necessary as he had many financial connections with stakeholders. Research revealed that financial security was one of the challenges that Black Pentecostal churches encountered during the transition.[150]

Furthermore, the information from Pastor Smith's interview was particularly important when looking to select a successor internally, being that he selected his son as his successor and experienced internal selection directly. Research shows that internal candidates should be handled with sensitivity and care as any perception of unfairness can cause disunity within the church.[151] All external and internal candidates should be evaluated equally. Once the final

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[148] Vanderbloemen and Bird, *Next: Pastoral*, 70.

[149] Ibid., 64.

[150] Matshobane and Masango, "The Challenge of Pastoral Succession," 4.

[151] Bullock, *Your Next Pastor*, 62.

candidates are selected by the founding pastor and the church board, consideration should have been given by the parishioners. After which, the ministry must implement an effective transition that will not negatively affect the church's forward movement.

Table 4. Interview Results with Pastor Frank Jones of TBC

1. What was your age upon taking over the church?	In the 40s.
2. What was your education level at the time of transition?	Master of Education
3. Was there a line of authoritative delineation made between you and your predecessor prior to taking over?	It wasn't concrete; it was loose. It should have been more outlined and more concrete; it needs to be formal. It was loose because of familiarity.
4. From your perspective, how receptive were congregants of you after the transition?	Excellent. They responded to all the leadership transitions and fully supported my new role. When asked if the congregants were assessed to determine the best fit for the role, he advised that "they did not have to be assessed because of their acclimation with me."
5. Did you attend seminary?	No seminarian education.
6. How involved is the founding pastor currently?	The first lady stayed on the board and her husband remained at the church in an oversight capacity which was not agreed upon.
7. Was there a transitional period?	Yes, six or seven months. The church was made aware at the beginning.
8. What anxieties did you have during the transition period? Were there any apprehensions?	Yes, anxiety with not knowing how the transition would happen with the former pastor and relinquishing authority.

9. Did your vision for the ministry differ from that of your predecessor?	Completely different. This is where the conflict occurred. The predecessor was essentially trying to continue to lead the church through me.
10. How did you know that you were to succeed your predecessor?	Called to the ministry, willing to accept the successor position and appointment. The primary call to the vision and assignment is to get the word out. Either way, it could have worked. I accepted being the successor, but when it didn't work, I knew I had to start my own.

Contrary to the retired founding pastor previously interviewed, the next interview was with a successor from another ministry.[152] Pastor Frank Jones of TBC revealed that his succession process was not successful. He advised that he was selected as the successor for a founding pastor when he was in his mid-forties. When asked if his education level was part of the consideration process for selection, he advised that it was not. It was further determined that the dynamics of his friendship with the founding pastor were a key factor in this requirement. However, it also contributed to the succession failing as there was no defined scope of work or boundaries. Vanderbloemen states that "good contracts are written by friends who set boundaries for when boundaries become hazy, circumstances unexpectedly change, or friendships are not functioning at optimal levels."[153] Regardless of a relationship, guidelines surrounding the succession transition and future leadership of the church must be documented. In this case, a clear line of authority was not established for the successor.

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[152] Pastor Frank Jones, interview by author, Newark, NJ, November 23, 2021.

[153] Vanderbloemen and Bird, *Next: Pastoral*, 70.

It should be noted that the congregant's attitude and expectation of this successor was extremely high. There was a transition period of approximately seven months, which prepared the church for the transition and led the members to be quite anticipatory. Once the transition went into effect, the successor decided to elect an entirely new board of directors, but the prior first lady also added herself to that board. Though the former senior pastor did not join the board, he remained a member giving oversight that was not agreed upon. According to research, the success or failure of pastoral succession surrounds the essential roles of the exiting pastor and his extended family.[154] With this type of authoritative intrusion, this successor advised that it was impossible to lead with a new vision effectively. In fact, he reported implementing a new vision was the issue that caused the transition to fail. He had been apprehensive of being the successor of this ministry for this reason. It is clear in this situation that the assessment of the attitudes and expectations of the congregants was not the problem. The problem was the exiting pastor not properly leaving the church. Subsequently, the successor resigned his role and started a ministry of his own.

Conclusion

Moreover, this study aimed to assess the attitudes and expectations of congregants within the African American church in Baltimore, Maryland. The results of this study provided two major elements: (1) The assessment of the FBC's pastor and the congregants (2) The assessment of two pastors who experienced transition as a predecessor and successor. In addition to the founding pastor's interview, these components will help validate that assessing congregants is needed within pastoral transition. Though the other two pastors interviewed did not assess their

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[154] Vanderbloemen and Bird, *Next: Pastoral.*.

congregants in survey form before the transition, they advised that a proper transition period and developing a rapport were just as effective.

These assessments will delineate how FBC should approach the succession process, considering that when the current pastor transitions, it is reasonably presumed that most of the congregation will remain. Having gained the congregants' insight, the founding pastor of FBC now has a sense of how to communicate the coming changes to the church. As such, this research has revealed that parishioners must contribute to a new leader's success, making this survey critical. What makes these results relevant is that the founding pastor of FBC can now prepare his transition around the results of his congregants' survey data which he believes greatly matters. That information allows FBC to properly develop the best strategy for its pastor's inevitable transition. Howbeit, these natural plans do not remove God's role in the overall outcome.[155]

Upon project completion, the founding pastor of FBC will receive the survey results from all participants. Subsequently, one of the questions in Pastor Rowe's interview was whether this project has helped ease some of his concerns as it relates to the perspective of his members on succession. Though the answer to that question was yes, it would not identify a successor. However, it does guide Pastor Rowe to begin preliminary planning until God reveals who that person will be. It should be noted that the information collected is also a good resource for other ministries to use as a template for preliminary succession planning, for example, timeframes to begin the transition process and how to prepare congregants for transition without telling them. The answers to these questions can help other ministries assess their ministry transition and hopefully avoid pitfalls mentioned by Pastor Frank Jones.

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[155] Vanderbloemen and Bird, *Next: Pastoral,* 27.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The topic for this thesis project focused on exploring the attitudes and expectations of African American congregants regarding the succession and transition of their Senior Pastor. The ministry context of this project revealed that this congregation is fondly attached to this senior pastor, who made this research even more vital. There is anticipation that some parishioners will not be content no matter who the founding pastor selects as his successor. This study's thesis statement aimed to curtail or minimize this discontentment by identifying a process that involves the laity's input. As indicated, this statement focused on establishing a clear understanding of the church member's anticipation of the successor's qualifications, personality, and background (compared to the founding pastor), which are all essential components for FBC to experience a smooth transition.

The data analysis of this project validates that including the congregants within the preliminary planning of the founding pastor's transition provided intricate detail in understanding the laity's expectations of its future leadership. While research showed that succession is a process and not one event, many pastors still do not prepare or take advantage of the time available before their transition.[156] By including this component in the succession planning process, it is hoped that this type of feedback from congregants will motivate transitioning pastors to utilize that information and prepare early.

The triangulation approach to this action research project through surveys, questionnaires and interviews provided an in-depth view of how the respondents understood the significance of pastoral transition. The participants from FBC's general church membership that completed the survey provided insight on pastoral transition from the laity's perspective. In contrast, the

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[156] Vanderbloemen and Bird, *Next: Pastoral,* 29.

questionnaires and interviews administered to the pastors offered viewpoints on the pastoral

transition from an ecclesiastical perspective. These results demonstrate it would benefit churches

to approach succession planning from an informed outlook. It was also important to note that the

questions asked to all participants are general enough that any ministry can adopt them.

The purpose of this study was not to study pastoral transition but to confirm how pastors

should approach succession planning through the lenses of inclusivity. The three prominent

themes of the project were: (1) Assessing the attitudes and expectations of the congregants of

FBC, which delineated the main objective. (2) Describing the need for succession planning

within the Black church due to the challenges of not implementing such plans. (3) Combining

laity assessments in succession planning by explaining the relevance of having church

parishioners a part of the overall process, which benefits the church's health. These themes

collectively promote effective succession planning and positive pastoral transitions within the

Black church by way of intentionality. Effective leaders plan and prepare in advance for their

transitions before they can no longer lead.[157] Without a doubt, the results further showed that

weighing the congregants' expectations of their senior pastor's transition is an effective

preliminary stage for the church to begin its succession planning in advance. To better correlate

these results with each aspect of the project, the following sections will focus on the study's

results related to the literature review, the theological framework, the theoretical framework, the

implications the research brought forth, and a final summary.

How the Project's Results Relates to the Literature Review

The literature reviewed for this study provided the framework around the need for

succession planning within the church. It was discovered that the beginning process of

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[157] Vanderbloemen and Bird, *Next: Pastoral,* 25.

succession planning ultimately begins with the senior pastor. If the pastor did not have a vision

for himself beyond where he was as a senior pastor, then it would be difficult for him to begin

any transitional efforts. This study highlighted that the lack of an exit strategy could directly

reflect on how a transition would unfold. The second founding pastor interviewed, who retired,

possessed an exit strategy well in advance of transitioning from his church. His interview

revealed that his congregants were prepared because he began the succession process seven years

prior. In addition, he acknowledged what his next assignment would be. This pastor understood

that he could not effectively move forward without understanding what God had for him to do

next. The line of separation provided by the pastor embracing the next phase leaves appropriate

space for the new leader to become acclimated with the church. Vanderbloemen and Bird viewed

this as "needed space," research showed that parishioners would reflect the lifestyle patterns of

their next leader,[158] and this cannot happen until the predecessor has moved on or set boundaries

for staying.

While the study projects that it is common for a founding pastor to remain on the

church's board after transition, other research supports doing so is not best for the church[159]. The

same retired pastor of SBC interviewed in this study was an exception to this fact. After he

transitioned the church to his successor, he remained part of the church's board. His rationale

was related to having most of the church's financial connections to its stakeholders. To avoid

undue hardship on his successor to recruit and gain sustainable financial stakeholders, this was

best not only for the church but also for the new pastor's success. He advised that the key to a

predecessor's success in remaining at a ministry he has transitioned from is setting boundaries

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[158] Vanderbloemen and Bird, *Next: Pastoral*, 148.

[159] Ibid., 84.

with the new pastor replacing him. The boundaries that this pastor and his successor created beforehand included informing the congregants. There was no secret policy; the parishioners were made aware of the boundaries that delineate the founding pastor's new role. A smooth transition was possible when a clear delineation of roles between the founding pastor and the new pastor was set. However, he recalled having to make a few public announcements to realign church members when they attempted to circumvent the authority of the successor. He made sure this was a peaceful transition and did what was necessary to maintain the tranquility.

Another component of the literature reviewed was that of servant leadership. The transitioning pastor displays the characteristics of a servant leader to successfully make the transition changes. He does what is best for the church in general and not just for himself. While he could have exited and allowed the financial infrastructure of the church to be a problem for the new pastor, he understood that he possessed a key component to keeping the church operating effectively. Not only that, but he respected the new leader and humbly refused to exercise any privilege of familiarity to exude illegal authority.

This pastor removed himself from the pulpit, allowing his successor to go into the forefront. He further would consult with the successor on any decision that needed to be made regarding the church's finances. As outlined in the study, servant leadership is understood as a selfless leader who views leadership as an act of service and embraces the feedback of others.[160] The results of this study showed that all three pastors interviewed were open to the feedback of their congregants and thought it was relevant to an effective transition. These pastors understood that their role as the senior leader was not something that could be done alone, and the input from others as they transitioned was critical.

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[160] Blanchard and Hodges, *The Servant Leader*, 17.

As previously mentioned, the transitioning pastor must have a positive outlook on his future, or else his attitude about the change can negatively affect church members. The literature reviewed suggests that people's attitudes can be influenced by a prominent figure, and it may be positive or negative. In this case, it would be the pastor leaving, where his behavior and demeanor would be of great influence until more impactful facts are introduced.[161] Undoubtedly, this would be hard to achieve for the incoming pastor when the trust and rapport have been established for years with the incumbent pastor. For this reason, the goal is to convey to pastors who are retiring that they must know their next phase in life and understand how crucial their exit will be for the church's health moving forward. Otherwise, they risk a harmonious transition and confuse those under their influence.

The third incoming pastor in TBC found himself in a similar situation. When he took over the church, his predecessor did not leave, but he and his wife remained and attempted to control how the new pastor would lead. In this case, despite starting with a new board of directors, the former pastor's wife joined without approval and began to include the former pastor. The two would soon circumvent the successor's authority and any new ways of doing church business. This would later result in turmoil in the church, causing the succession to fail and the new pastor to leave. His predecessor resumed his role as senior pastor, and the church's faith was shaken. This research showed the relevance that pastors must exit peaceably or remain diplomatically. It further showed that if an exiting pastor did not have another vision for the future, he would inevitably continue to embrace what he was to leave behind.

When speaking about being a peacemaker, one would think that pastors should be at the top of this list. However, as this study has shown, even pastors can make a transition toxic. This

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[161] Eiser and Pligt, "Attitudes and Decisions."

is where the literature about Practical Theology is relevant. Throughout this project, the role of being a pastor and that of a CEO had several parallelisms. But the main idea that set the two apart was the inclusion of God in how each would ultimately lead. Practical Theology directs those pastors to exude faithful living and authentic practice among believers.[162] This source of information validates even more that pastors who are leaving a ministry, regardless of how they feel, should do so in a godly manner. Not doing so is just one aspect of the church's challenges during a transition.

Pastors who do not plan for their inevitable exit or have a mind to remain in position until death are some of the challenges related to succession planning. Several resources outlined these challenges. The results of this study validated the literature findings; some pastors refused to relinquish the mantle, resulting in a tumultuous fight for power.[163] In another case, there were situations where leadership styles between the predecessor and the successor were significantly different, which caused frustrations among congregants. Challenges such as these could be better managed when parishioners are included in the succession process or appropriate time is provided for adjustment. This was evident in the interview with the senior pastor from the other ministry (SBC), who transitioned successfully.

To ensure that these research results were collected and analyzed accurately, it was necessary to use literature that would support this effort. This project used the survey research model to gather information about a larger population from a smaller sample. In this case, the entire congregational body of FBC could not be surveyed but selecting a smaller group that would represent different ages, membership roles, and tenure were ideal. That information was

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[162] Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology*, 6

[163] Matshobane and Masango, "The Challenge of Pastoral".

paramount to the overall accuracy of the results as it would represent a greater mass with limited

data. The survey research model literature provided insight into getting the samples closer to

describing the whole population. In essence, it outlined how to minimize sampling errors while

increasing the likelihood of producing results that would reflect the general population of the

church.

How the Project's Results Related to the Theological Framework

Five biblical principles provided a theological basis for this project as the Bible provides

numerous examples of leadership successions and how people were instrumental in the success

of their leaders. The first one focused on the training of the next generation. It was essential to

illuminate biblical principles surrounding the training of leaders such as Moses and Joshua,

Elijah and Elisha, Paul and Timothy, and Jesus and His disciples. In most of these instances,

these leaders' protégés had the opportunity to observe the leader directly in the work of ministry.

Question four of the survey to FBC's congregants revealed that all respondents, or 100%, agreed

that Pastor Rowe's successor should be someone who has been a member of the ministry. It is

reasonably understood that this perception has to do with that person's acclimation with the

church and the relevancy of their training and tutelage under the founding pastor.

The second principle was a reminder that the ultimate selection of the successor belonged

to God. Regardless of what the founding pastor desires or the congregants desire, God must be

the final decision-maker. Not allowing God to be the final decision maker can lead to many other

problems. This can be seen in 1 Samuel 9 when Saul was selected as king due to the Children of

Israel's persistent request which was based on outward appearance. This research revealed that

44% of the respondents have confidence that the founding pastor will not only make the best

decision of when to notify the church when a successor is found, but he will choose a successor that God appoints. The congregants trust Pastor Rowe to select the successor approved by God.

The third principle was that a lack of succession planning could create challenges for the church. Though the founding pastor of FBC has a succession plan, assessing the congregants was not a component of it until now. This research demonstrated the benefits of including laity within the succession plan. Before this project, FBC had some challenges where people began to assume that a successor was already identified or that the founding pastor would leave abruptly. As previously mentioned, these rumors caused some parishioners to approach Pastor Rowe about their contemplation of leaving the ministry simply because they were unaware. The disclaimer in the consent form specifically debunked these false narratives. Pastor Rowe's approval and affirmation of this project and its consent form clearly communicated to the members that: (1) the succession planning was an ongoing process, (2) and no successor has been selected.

The fourth principle was biblical qualifications for successors in leadership. In 1Timothy 3:7, Paul outlines specific qualifications that a person should have to be a leader. Pastor Rowe's interview revealed that he desires his successor to have the same qualities that Paul mentions in this text. Above all, he wants the person to have a strong love for God and His people. The congregants confirmed the founding pastor's desire as 46% prefer the successor to have a similar personality and heart like Pastor Rowe. In addition, as it related to the successor's education level, 52% thought master's level or higher was needed. This part of the study confirms that this principle is relevant and biblical.

The fifth principle was the importance of the laity in the success of their leader. Through the process of time, even dating back to the dispensation of Moses as the leader of the Exodus, people supporting rulers and leaders were quite instrumental in either their success or failure.

This theological premise supports the notion that including congregants within the major decisions of the church is vital to victory. In Exodus 17:12, Moses and the children of Israel were at the battle of Rephidim, and there is symbolism that shows that when the leader's hands were lifted, the battle was won. Pastor Rowe confirmed during his interview that knowing how the members of the church felt was important so he would know how to best triage the matter. This revealed that he could not do this effectively without considering the expectations of the congregants.

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How the Project's Results Related to the Theoretical Framework

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Chapter two of this study outlines three theoretical foundations for this study. The first one focused on leadership transference, where active comparisons between leaders were inevitable.[164] Research further showed that this type of comparison could lead to disappointment as erroneous generalizations can lead to false expectations.[165] In the case of this study, the results revealed that 46% of parishioners surveyed that they desired the new pastor of FBC to have a similar personality and leadership style of the founding pastor. However, to be proactive in addressing this type of flawed expectation, the current senior pastor of FBC would need to show his support for change and innovation before leaving. This type of leadership transference would essentially allow the church to embrace whatever changes the new leader brings, whether he has a similar or different style of leading. However, congregants must have a solid line of trust with the exiting leader for this to be successful. The results of this study revealed that is the case as it relates to FBC.

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[164] Ritter and Lord, "The Impact of Previous Leader".

[165] Ibid.

The second theoretical foundation builds upon the first. Leadership transference is based upon the impression that the exiting leader leaves upon others as it relates to the hope of the future. This one focused more on the Psychology of Influence, where the art of persuasion can come in many different forms.[166] The source of information will be a greater influence than what is being conveyed. The most important point as it relates to the results of this survey is that the founding pastor is deemed the most important source to relay information to the church. When the participants were asked the best time frame to be notified of the founding pastor's transition, the majority, or 44%, selected whenever the senior pastor decided. This indicates that most are confident that the founding pastor knows what is best for the church. It further reveals that the parishioners view the senior pastor as trustworthy and reliable.

The third theoretical foundation surrounds the Theory of Attitude.[167] While the other two are geared around leadership transference and the impact of influence, this one looks at how the parishioners processed these two perceptions in the form of attitude. It is important to note that "the way one expresses an attitude reveals the social and historical context of the situation and environment at hand.[168] There were no questions that resulted in all the respondents answering the same question with the exact answer. This means that the results were dependent upon the attitude and expectation of that individual. Insight is gleaned when looking at the survey's first question around a sufficient transition period between the time a successor is identified and the time that the founding pastor would officially retire. The research results showed that the younger the respondents, the less time they expected for a sufficient transition period. However, the older the participants were, the results showed that they anticipated a longer period for

[166] Pligt and Vliek, *The Psychology of Influence,* 1.

[167] Eiser and Pligt, "Attitudes and Decisions."

[168] Ibid.

transition. The hypothesis here is that the more acclimated and the longer the member spent under the founding pastor, the greater the impact on their attitude about him leaving. These individuals may be dealing with some separation anxiety. In contrast, the younger generation's attitude is more open to what is next, potentially based on their limited experience with the founder. Either way, the results were unique solely based on the respondents' perceptions, history, and familiarity with the situation.

Significance and Implications

This section of the project addresses the study's implications, which reviews the researcher's reflections on implementing the project, how future research in this area can be augmented, modified, or improved, and how the study results could apply in other settings. Additional emphasis upon succession planning within the church is relevant and needed no matter the location or denomination. Though this assessment was only one aspect of succession planning, it is still crucial to the forward movement of the body of Christ.

Why this Study is Needed for All Pastors

In this researcher's secular career, succession planning was something that has been successfully implemented on two occasions when the time came to transition into other roles. Subsequently, this birthed a passion for ensuring that operational components of an agency would be continued regardless of the organization. As it relates to this project, this researcher has been a member of FBC for over twenty years. Many of the members are quite attached to the founding pastor. At times, guest speakers were not embraced if they did not reflect the standard of the pastor. This was daunting for Pastor Rowe as many of the congregants only desired his leadership which caused him some anxiety about how the church would fare when the time came for his retirement. Some members even told him that they would leave once he retired. After

several conversations with the founding pastor concerning his approaching retirement age and succession, it became clear this project was paramount.

The conversation this researcher had with Pastor Rowe before the results of this project was much different once the research concluded. While the first was filled with anxiety, the second was more hopeful and assured. The second conversation involved discussing the parishioners' survey results about his transition. He found the results relevant and thought that it was quite helpful. He stated that "this was needed."[169] As previously mentioned, most of the parishioners surveyed believed a two-to-four-year transition period was sufficient. When Pastor Rowe was asked about his retirement timeline, he disclosed that it would be three to five years once a successor is selected. This was well aligned with the desires of the church members, bringing about ease upon their senior leader. The research results provided a renewed peace of mind for Pastor Rowe, enabling him to approach the remaining of his succession plan in an informed manner.

Furthermore, after interviewing the two pastors from SBC and TBC, it was revealed that while both agreed that assessing the parishioners' attitudes and expectations were relevant, neither of them did so in a formal manner. They both advised that planning ahead of time produced similar results as the assessments. They had ample time to transition in both of their situations, giving congregants the ability to ask questions and get adjusted. Though the pastor of TBC did not have a successful transition, it was not due to the congregants but his predecessor's interference after the transition.

Additionally, assessing the congregation played an integral role in correcting false information. While there are multiple layers to succession planning within the church, this

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[169] Rowe, Interview.

project only focused on one component which is most relevant to FBC at this time. Other components are needed to ensure that the plan is effective. As it relates to Pastor Rowe, he has a plan in place, but it did not include assessing the congregation. This was quite important as some members began to listen to the propaganda or misinformation from unreliable sources. While this researcher was at the church, some members advised that they were glad to see the survey as they were left to incorrectly believe the rumors that a successor was already in line. This was part of the reason that some congregants were coming to Pastor Rowe, indicating they were about to leave the ministry. More importantly, this survey the truth concerning the rumors and that planning is still in progress with no immediate sign of the founding pastor leaving.

The final lesson learned was that the model for this survey offers a template to assess other leadership positions within the ministry. Church leadership can also use this as a forerunner to assess members at various ministry levels. FBC has multiple levels of leadership roles and positions that would benefit from having the input from the laity instead of just selecting new leaders to serve. The results from this project offered insight that ministry members desire a leader similar to the founding pastor. The church can consider these results when selecting leaders for other roles within the ministry.

<center>Recommendations for Future Research</center>

It is important to note that this project focused on one local church and not the Body of Christ at large. While many churches and pastors are experiencing the same issues regarding succession, these entities all face their own limitations based upon their ministry context. There are two areas that this researcher believes can benefit from future research. The first one is conducting more in-depth research of why succession planning is lagging within the Black church. During this study, there was limited information on this subject matter. Could succession

planning not be lacking within the Black church but is it being done inappropriately? Due to its limited research, there is currently not enough information to answer this question.

The second benefit surrounds increasing the population size and targeting congregants within the body of Christ, in general, that would reflect different races, denominations, and backgrounds. This research revealed that succession planning was lagging within the Black church and that of other churches with different ethnicities. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 12 that there are many members but one body. It would be interesting to see what information a systematic assessment of congregants with a larger sample will yield—in other words, conducting an assessment with a body of believers who are not affiliated with a denomination, race, or ethnicity. It would be interesting to see if denominations play a key role in how individuals perceive the process of their pastor transitioning. The results of that research could potentially be the catalyst to embracing a much larger church succession program that anyone can also utilize.

The third recommendation for research would be to include an assessment of senior pastors who do not desire to transition but believe that their post is until death. Understanding their mindset would help in hopefully encouraging them that retiring and moving on would be better for their ministries, as seen in biblical examples throughout this study where prominent individuals planned for their successors, such as Moses, Elijah, and even Jesus. This researcher believes that some pastors have this thought process due to a lack of knowledge or support from others. Getting concrete information from these church leaders will help with research to provide evidence that succession planning is essential and leaders not embracing it creates challenges for the ministry of Christ.

How the Results can be Applied in Other Settings

This researcher believes that the survey questions used to assess the congregants at FBC are specific enough to be adopted by other ministries. Depending upon that ministry's context, history, culture, and leadership style, the results may be different. Since the participants of FBC are quite dependent upon the current founding pastor, another ministry without this type of dependency would fare differently. However, this survey can serve as a template for planning and assessing pastoral succession, as well as other levels of ministry related to church leadership. The purpose of this assessment is to ensure that the church continues to move forward in a healthy and productive manner.

When applying this same concept outside of a church ministry context, employees in certain businesses can be included in the leaders' succession. As noted earlier in this research, secular corporations have a different way of approaching succession that is based more on merit. However, the principle of inclusivity would still apply, which can potentially boost staff morale. Employees being included in the process of succession in the corporate industry would not only allow for staff to provide input, but it would give them the incentive to prepare for positions with increased responsibility.

Final Summary

Succession within any organization is challenging, especially for leaders with long tenures, as they leave the organization with a wealth of knowledge that cannot be transferred overnight.[170] Long pastorates are typically healthy for churches as short pastorates tend to yield instability in church growth.[171] This is why the successor's age matters, as selecting a successor

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[170] Matshobane and Masango, "The Challenge of Pastoral".

[171] Vanderbloemen and Bird, *Next: Pastoral*, 80.

not much younger than the senior pastor defeats the purpose of succession planning. While 42% of the respondents in this study believed that the age of Pastor Rowe's successor did not matter, the balance indicated that it did matter and should be within a specific age range. Age is significant as it relates to pastoral longevity.

The intervention was designed to assist the pastor of FBC in evaluating the mood and tone of his congregation. The results in chapter four proved this to be successful. Other churches can use the same approach to include their laity, who are the most prominent stakeholders in the succession planning process. Succession planning was not the main focus of this project; it was designed to have ministries include their church members in the process. For some churches, this may be something currently practiced, but research indicates that it is generally lacking. Though the research is not groundbreaking with new theories, it added to the current resources available on the subject matter. This approach explored the significance of contributions that people have contributed to their leader's success throughout scripture.

Overall, this project was aimed to help the current founding pastor of FBC and other pastors alike to take advantage of the time before their transition by preparing the successor, board of directors, the day staff, and the ministry by implementing a transition plan that all can partake. It is anticipated that regardless of a successful transition plan, there will be congregants and staff who will not fully embrace new leadership after the current pastor has been in place for an extended period. The point that must be made is that the person selected will be God appointed and meet the standards of the role. The emphasis on including laity reflects the notion that they are the church's leading stakeholders. First Corinthians 12:12 states that there are many members, but one body, the structure of each church is the same. One leader cannot be successful alone; it takes the other members of the body to make that happen. Whether utilizing

an official assessment to explore the congregants' expectations or implementing a transition plan far in advance that offers sufficient time for adjustment are two strategies that can individually be used to implement an effective succession plan. Thus, making the research and results of this study a guidepost for Black churches to improve succession planning initiatives while simultaneously fulfilling this project's problem statement.

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Appendix A

Survey Questions for Phase One - Congregants

1. What is a healthy time frame that you believe it will take for the founding pastor of your church to transition when a successor is selected in the future?
   a. 5 years
   b. 2 – 4 years
   c. 1 – 2 years
   d. 6 – 12 months

2. When the time is right, do you think the founding pastor's successor should reflect the same education level?
   a. Yes, Doctoral Level
   b. No, doesn't matter
   c. Somewhat, Master's Level
   d. Not sure

3. What age group would you desire the founding pastor's successor to be?
   a. 30 – 40 years of age
   b. 40 – 50 years of age
   c. 50 – 60 years of age
   d. Doesn't matter

4. In your opinion, who would be the most ideal candidate to succeed the founding pastor?
   a. Someone whose been a part of the ministry for years, and has a similar personality, leadership/teaching style and heart as the founding pastor.
   b. Someone from a different ministry.
   c. It doesn't matter if they can teach and preach the word of God.
   d. Someone who has a different personality, leadership/teaching style and heart as the founding pastor but is full of the spirit of God.

5. Would you prefer the founding pastor's successor to be _____?
   a. Married
   b. Single
   c. Doesn't matter
   d. Not sure

6. What is your expectation of how soon congregants should be notified when a successor is identified?
   a. Immediately
   b. When the founding pastor decides to notify
   c. Within 6 months of selecting a successor
   d. Not sure

7. What is your age range?
   a. 18 – 30 years of age
   b. 31 – 44 years of age
   c. 45 – 60 years of age
   d. 61 years of age or older

8. Which category best applies to you?
   a. Serves as a member of the church's ministerial team
   b. Serves as a member of the youth department
   c. Has been a member of the ministry since the first five to seven years of inception
   d. Serves in another area of ministry
   e. Joined the ministry within the last 5 years

Appendix B

Interview Questions for Phase Two – Founding Pastor

1. Outside of God's approval, what are you looking for in a successor? Does education level matter?

2. How many more years do you prefer to pastor full-time?

3. What do you see being a sufficient timeframe for a transition when a successor is identified?

4. What would that transition period look like?

5. What role would you take after the transition is complete?

6. Will your successor have full autonomy of leading the ministry thereafter? How would you be certain that is the case?

7. How will you prepare the congregants for this transition?

8. Are you concerned that the vision that you have for the ministry will be loss once a successor takes over?

9. What do you want to see your successor accomplish in the years to come after the transition?

10. Do you believe assessing the attitudes and expectations of congregants is relevant regarding pastoral succession?

Appendix C

Interview Questionnaire for Phase Three – Part One Pastor (another ministry)

1. Age (range) when transitioned from being the senior pastor?

2. What was your level of education, and did you attend seminary? How relevant was education for the path of senior pastoring?

3. Were you ever concerned that your vision for the ministry would be forgotten? How did you assure full autonomy was given to your successor to lead the ministry?

4. When did you realize that it was time to transition?

5. Did you have a succession plan prior to the transition?

6. What were the deciding factors for selecting this successor over other candidates?

7. Was the decision inclusive of the congregation or was it a church board decision?

8. Did you remain on the church's board of directors after transition? If so, what was the reason?

9. How long was the transition period?

10. Were you ever concerned with not finding the right person to succeed you?

Appendix D

Interview Questionnaire for Phase Four – Part Two Successor (another ministry)

1. What was your age upon taking over the church?

2. What was your education level at the time of transition?

3. Did you attend seminary?

4. How involved is the founding pastor currently?

5. Was there a line of authoritative delineation made between you and your predecessor prior to taking over?

6. How did you prepare for the transition?

7. From your perspective, how receptive were congregants of you after the transition?

8. What anxieties did you have during the transition period? Were there any apprehensions?

9. Did your vision for the ministry differ from that of your predecessor?

10. How did you know that you were to succeed your predecessor?

Appendix E

Recruitment Email

Greetings,

You are receiving this email because you have been selected to participate in a brief survey on assessing the attitudes and expectations of church members as it relates to pastoral succession. Please note that this survey only serves as a requirement for partial completion of a school project. This survey by no means indicates or communicates that your current senior pastor is transitioning. Once again, this survey is being used for school purposes only, and will be considered as research for other ministries and school institutions to utilize when it comes to the research of succession planning. By voluntarily completing this survey you are agreeing that you have not been forced or coerced to participate. This survey is a total of 6 multiple choice questions. Please select the answers that you believe best fit the question.

Appendix F

IRB Approval

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

August 27, 2021

Tony Hinton
Rodney Phillips

Re: IRB Application - IRB-FY21-22-159 An Exploration of the Attitudes and Expectations of African American Congregants Regarding the Succession and Transition of their Senior Pastor

Dear Tony Hinton and Rodney Phillips,

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 does not classify as human subjects research. This means you may begin your project with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your IRB application.

Decision: No Human Subjects Research

Explanation: Your study is not considered human subjects research for the following reason:

Your project will consist of quality improvement activities, which are not "designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge" according to 45 CFR 46. 102(l).

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

Also, although you are welcome to use our recruitment and consent templates, you are not required to do so. If you choose to use our documents, please replace the word research with the word project throughout both documents.

If you have any questions about this determination or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your application's status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

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